SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 353. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 5TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

BE SURE TO CUT

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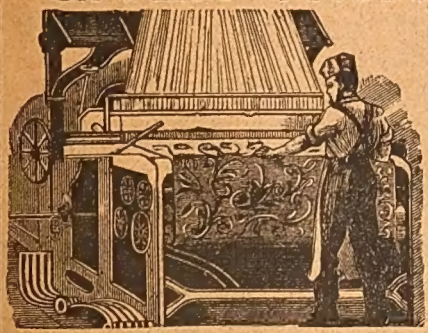

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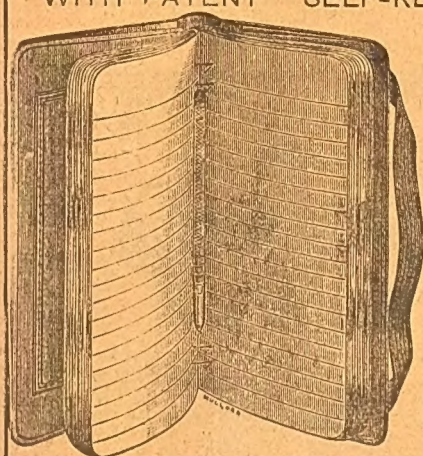

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EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

No. 353.] For the Week ending October 5th, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

Their First Dinner Party.

THEY had only been married a month, and they had asked two friends to dinner. It was only an informal invitation, and her note wound up with: "If you are able to come don't trouble to reply." It was the first time they had had guests; consequently they were a little flurried when the time came for them to arrive.

She had superintended the arranging of the table herself, and now stood surveying its obviously new silver, glass, and linen, with housewifely pride.

"Do you really think everything will go well, Edward?" she asked for the twentieth time.

And for the twentieth time he replied:

"Of course it will all go well. I only pity the poor fellows who have no little wife and no home of their own."

"Oh, Edward, how nice!" she whispered; "and how I do pity the poor girls who have no nice, kind husbands. There is Edith. She is such a sweet girl, she really ought to know how nice it is to be married."

"Yes, indeed; and then there is George. He has no idea what happiness he is missing."

She walked into the drawing-room, and, standing before the mirror, rearranged the rose in her hair.

"Do you like it so?" she asked.

"It is lovely. Poor George, how he must envy me!"

"And, oh, Edward, I do feel sorry for Edith. Hark, is that a carriage?"

They both fell into easy attitudes of expectancy, but the carriage rolled on. He took out his watch and looked at it; it was just seven.

"Oh, dear," she moaned, "I'm afraid they will not be prompt, and my note said seven sharp."

"Perhaps my watch is fast," he said soothingly.

She shifted the rosebud a little, then replaced it, regarding herself in the glass with a critical air. He walked up and down with his hands in his pockets.

* * * * * *

The clock chimed the half-hour.

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"You are sure you said seven sharp?"

"Of course I am. I am not quite an imbecile yet, if I married you."

"Who is talking unkindly now?"

"Oh, I never thought that you would treat me so when you begged me to marry you."

"I only asked you once, and you said yes quick enough."

"I never thought you would be a brute."

"And I never thought you would lose your temper like this."

"Nobody will accept my invitations now, just because I have married you—mamma said I was making a mistake."

"People were always glad enough to accept my invitations before I was married."

"Very well, if you want to be free I will go home."

"If you want to go, pray don't allow me to detain you."

* * * * *

The clock chimed out eight strokes; carriages kept rolling by, but none of them stopped. She swept into the bedroom, and began opening drawers and boxes and taking out their contents, which she could not see for her tears. He tried to hum "After the Ball," watching her movements furtively through the open door. Would she leave him? And what would people say if she did?

She tumbled the costly things about in a careless fashion. What did their beauty matter now when she was going home with a broken heart to die!

Then she gave a cry. Her eye had fallen on a white slip of paper in the corner of a drawer.

"Edward!" she cried, in tragic tones, "here is the note—I had forgotten to send it!"

They looked at each other for a moment—these two who were about to part for ever—then a smile curled the corners of her mouth. In an instant she was clasped in his arms. Then a harsh voice sounded at the door:

"Would yez be havin' any dinner to-noight?"

"Oh, Edward," she whispered, "how shall I ever tell the cook?"

W. H.

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Love - and - Life.

A TWOFOLD SACRIFICE.

It was the very saddest summer that I ever spent. I do not think I shall ever forget the pathos—the tragedy of it. After a few weeks' tramping tour through the south-west of England I found myself again in London, somewhat freckled and tanned, and my senses full of the perfume of mignonette and wild-rose hedges. I did not intend to stay long—only long enough to glance at accumulations of letters, and send a few telegrams, and then be off again to the streams and the meadows and the quaint old roadside inns, with their apple-cheeked barmaids and excellent provender. But where to go? That was the question.

Ah? here was a letter on the very top of the little heap that my landlady had piled on my mantelpiece, and that decided me at once. It was from Archie Trevor, as bright and handsome a boy as ever toed football-leather, and who had distinguished himself scholastically as well as athletically at Cambridge. "I won't take any refusal," he wrote; "you simply have to come, old chap. This is the loveliest spot in the world, and, besides, I'm engaged, and I want you to see the loveliest creature that ever drew breath. I'll expect you any time within ten days. If you don't show up in that time I'll come after you."

As the friend of Archie's father, though many years his junior, I had been thrown much in contact with the boy, and since the old gentleman's death we had been warm friends. Archie in love, eh? Well, I felt sure it would be a serious matter with him. He was earnest and intense by nature, and had never played the butterfly with the women of his acquaintance.

Archie's letter was, I perceived, a week old, but in just three days I found myself in the quaint little Welsh seaport town from which he had written. I climbed the hill and inquired my way to Rose Cottage, and when I came to it and to Mr. Archie it was all I could do to prevent myself bellowing with delight at the infinite beauty of the scene.

The long white walls of the cottage were massed with roses from top to bottom. Roses clustered over the thatched roof, roses nodded their heads from the mullioned windows, and brushed your coat-sleeve as you walked along the narrow path. At the back of the cottage was a comfortable lawn and more roses—ever roses—countless roses. And, stretching away in the distance, shimmering in the sunlight, was the sea.

Archie leapt from a hammock and grabbed me by the hand. "How glad I am to see you, dear old Jack!" he exclaimed, his delicate cheeks flushing with pleasure. I returned his greeting in kind, and then for the first time became conscious of the girl standing shyly by us.

She had risen from a low chair on the farther side of the hammock, and had a book in her hand, from which she had evidently been reading to my constitutionally lazy friend. Her beauty simply stunned me. She was very tall, quite two inches taller than Archie, with one of those almost faultless figures that, in girlhood at least, one finds in England, and nowhere else.

She had light-brown hair, on which the sun scattered little gold flecks, and her eyes were of the deepest, tenderest blue, and big and earnest and wistful. Lastly, she was dressed all in white—the only hue for a sweet girl's dress in summer—and it is scarcely necessary to say that I surrendered to Master Archie's *fiancée* at discretion, mentally voting him the luckiest dog under heaven, no matter who she might be.

That night, as we sat smoking our farewell pipes, and with that glorious odour of roses stealing in through the open windows, Archie told me his story. It was romantic enough. He had been riding past, three weeks ago, on his bicycle, and had had a bad fall at the very moment he had been slackening speed to admire the beauty of the garden of roses. Dorothy (for that was her name) had seen his ungraceful performance, and his ineffectual effort to rise. At her commands an ancient gardener had wheeled him into the house, in ridiculous fashion enough, and the village doctor had attended to his dislocated knee. Dorothy's aunt had, during the next three weeks, fallen almost as deeply in love with the handsome young sufferer as had her niece. Yes, indeed, I congratulated Archie over and over again.

Dorothy and I became firm friends at once. Perhaps it was because I knew myself to be too old and worldly-wise to get into any sort of danger that led me to associate with this pair of lovers so freely. The three of us took long rambles together through the meadows and down by the restless and ever-changing sea. It did me good on such occasions to note Archie's almost childish delight in his *fiancée*. After all, he was nothing but a boy, despite his twenty-seven years. He laughed the whole day long, and made love to Dorothy as one makes love to a beautiful, spoiled child.

And she? Why, she accepted it all in a silent, satisfied sort of way. She accepted the boy's kisses soberly, without any show of emotion, and as a matter of course. I sometimes thought I would give £100 to see her tremble or blush. It was easy to see that this was her first love. She was so matter-of-fact about it all, and it was so easy to see there was not a vestige of passion in it for her. I could see, too, that she was proud of her handsome boy-lover in a certain way. As she sat on the sand, looking so very lovely in her white dress, with that far-away look on the dewy blue eyes, she would stroke with her slim hands the blonde head that lay so luxuriously on her lap and smile shyly up at me for congratulation and approval.

And then came the first chapter in the tragedy.

The three of us had been for a long ramble along the beach, and Archie had his pockets filled with the shells and other treasures gathered by his sweetheart. We were on our way back, for rain had begun to fall heavily and a few rumblings of thunder warned us of the typical Welsh storm that was in store for us. We were making a short cut up a winding path through the cliffs, when the storm broke in all its fury.

I don't think I have ever seen such lightning, or heard such thunder, not even in the tropics. I was leading the way, and between the awful peals I could hear

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Archie encouraging the beautiful girl he was half carrying, half dragging along.

There suddenly came a peal loud enough to wake the dead, and as it died away I uttered a yell of warning and sprang aside. A huge piece of rock, fully four feet high, loosened by the shock, was sliding down the path. As it passed me I glanced back, and turned sick with horror, for the pair were just at a point where they could not hope to escape it. They could not turn to the right or left, and immediately behind them was another rock, immovably fixed, and against which the down-coming fragment would grind them, as it seemed, to pieces.

It all happened in an instant. I was powerless to help. At the instant, apparently, that the rock was sliding upon them, I saw Archie seize Dorothy in his arms, below the waist, and lift her up. Higher and higher he raised her, till she rested on his shoulder. Then there was a horrible crunching sound that I shall never forget.

* * * * *

It took two strong men with crowbars to release my friend. By good fortune the rock that had fallen was conically-shaped, the smaller end uppermost, else he would have inevitably been crushed. As it was, both his legs were shattered from the knee down.

No sufferer was ever nursed as Archie was. Dorothy, whose grief was pitiable, would never have left his side if I had not forced her to do so.

I had, of course, written to the Trevor family of the accident, and then, one divinely-beautiful August night, Lieutenant Guy Trevor, Archie's elder brother, came to Rose Cottage to see him. His ship was at Portsmouth, and the moment he heard of the boy's mishap, he hurried to him. And the great big sailor—he was over six feet, and looked like some giant of the Orient, with his splendid proportions, and tanned features—knelt by his young brother's bed, and spoke to him with sobs in his deep bass voice.

Through the window I saw the meeting between the sailor and Dorothy, and I have often wondered since then why I did not scent the peril at the time.

Both stood for an instant perfectly still, transfixed by each other's wonderful physical beauty; then Guy introduced himself, and the two walked slowly away, talking in whispers of the calamity that had befallen the boy they both loved so dearly.

Twice during that week I saw the tears stealing down the pale cheeks of the cripple, as he lay there, so still, on his narrow white bed. Once he spoke to me of Dorothy. "You must tell her, old man," he whispered, "that I release her unconditionally."

"She will not hear of it," I answered.

And then the day arrived for the coming of the London surgeon. He brought two assistants with him. Guy, Dorothy, and I were present at their interview with the lad.

"Let me understand," said Archie, in weak tones, but bravely; "if I do not choose to submit to this—this operation, it is certain death, isn't it?"

The great man bowed his head.

"What shall I do, Dorothy?" The tones were very tremulous now.

"Oh, Archie!" she sobbed, sinking on her knees by the bed, "submit to it for my sake. It will make no difference. I will care for you as long as I live."

I happened to glance at the giant, Guy, and saw that his bronzed face had turned almost white.

"Well," sighed the patient, softly stroking the bright head of the kneeling girl, "it shall be as you say. Shall we begin, doctor?"

"Not to-night, my boy," answered the surgeon, rather huskily—the man evidently possessed some feeling—"you will need all your strength. To-morrow morning, early——"

He did not finish the sentence, and all but I withdrew, Dorothy weeping silently. I sat and watched my young friend sink into a restless sleep.

I must have dozed myself, for I presently found the moon shining softly through the open window, and with the silvery beams that lighted up the wan face on the pillow in a ghastly way came the eternal scent of roses.

As I leant forward to make sure my patient was asleep, I heard voices from the verandah just beyond the window of the room, which was on the ground floor of the cottage. Presently I heard Guy speaking. There was no mistaking those deep bass tones.

"I do not think," he was saying, "that it is so very vile in me. No man could help loving you, and Heaven knows I would not seek to betray that poor boy in there by so much as a thought. Nor would I wish you to do so. To-morrow I will go away, for I cannot bear it. But before I go you must tell me—there is no harm in that, I think—you love me, do you not?"

I could not hear the response; only a low, passionate sobbing. That placid nature was aroused at last.

"I knew it, dear," went on the deep voice, "I knew it that first night that you looked into my eyes. And it is because I know that you love me that I should wish you to be as you are—strong and faithful and true. I love my brother and—I am an honest man. But when I go I shall leave all my life here with you. Dorothy, dear, good night and—good-bye."

Silence. I could feel the magnetism of the inevitable kiss, just as if I had seen it. I heard a faint rustle of draperies and the tread of vanishing feet. Then I looked at Archie, and my heart stood still.

His eyes were closed, but tears were trickling through the long lashes, and the sensitive mouth quivered. He had heard every word, I had no doubt, and was now trying to feign sleep, obviously for my benefit.

There was a choking in my heart as I rose and left the room. I could not bear it. I looked in once or twice during the night, to find the same thing—tear-stained cheeks and a sham sleep.

When we entered the room in the morning he smiled cheerfully, and extended his hand to the surgeon. "Doctor," he said, briskly, "I've changed my mind. You shan't saw my shins off. I'll take chances. I've that right, haven't I?"

"Certainly, Mr. Trevor," answered the man gravely, "but I warn you that it will be fatal."

Nothing that we could say could shake his determination. His brother Guy, whose great figure seemed to fill the room, joined his pleadings to Dorothy's, but to no avail. When the doctor and his men had gone, he breathed a sigh of relief, and went fast asleep with his hand in Dorothy's.

He died very suddenly ten days afterwards. There was a glorious sunset of crimson and gold, and still that eternal scent of the roses. He rose suddenly from his pillow and looked out over the sea and then sank gently back. Dorothy was by his side in an instant, but he only touched her cheek lightly with his lips and then beckoned to his brother. "Guy—dear old Guy!" he murmured, pulling the great shaggy head down upon his emaciated breast—"kiss me, old chap, and take care of *her*." That was the end.

And neither of them ever knew.

MARY BRYAN.

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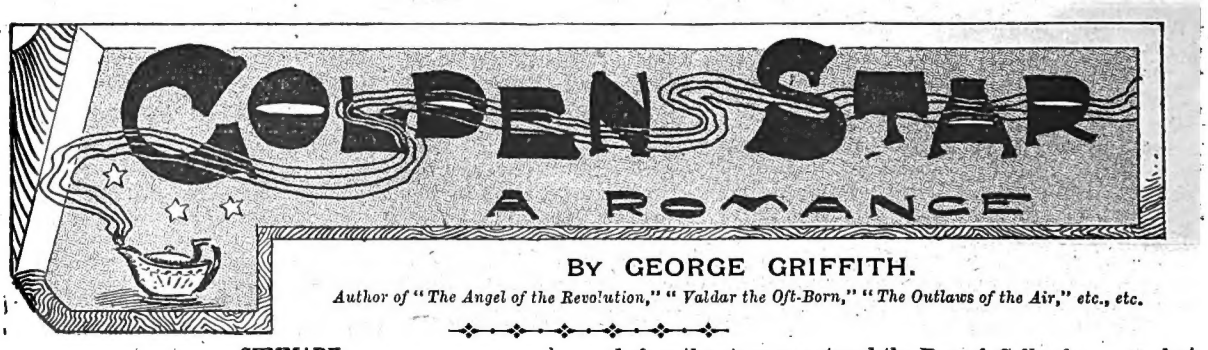

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

The prologue tells of the bridal of Vilcaroya and Golden Star, on the eve of the fall of the Inca empire. It has been prophesied that when the sceptre of the Incas shall be grasped by the hand of one who has been dead, and is alive again, the ancient glories of their empire shall be restored. Golden Star, one of the Virgins of the Sun, offers herself as the bride of him who will fulfil the prophecy. Vilcaroya swears for love of her to dare the ordeal. Three hundred years later Professor Martin Lamson brings back to England a mummy which he found in a cave in the Cordilleras of the Peruvian Andes. A doctor, Laurens Djama, is present while he is unpacking it, and undertakes to restore it to animation. The mummy is removed to Djama's laboratory, and in a week he shows the Professor his mummy alive. The Professor learns that he is the Vilcaroya of the legend. He asks for Golden Star, and they tell him that she has been dead for over three hundred years. He promises them that if they will restore her, too, to life he will give them untold treasures. He rapidly regains health and strength, chiefly under the guidance of Ruth, the doctor's sister, and in six months all preparations have been made, and the party, including Ruth, embark for Peru. They meet in Panama a friend of Professor Lamson, Captain Hartness, who joins their party.

CHAPTER VII.

SOUTHWARD.

The voyage of the *Imperial* from Panama to Mollendo was as lacking in any element of excitement as such voyages always are, saving in times of war or revolution. It so happened that just now the whole coast was quiet from Colombia to Chile, a strange phenomenon which was destined to be the prelude to a battle-storm, compared with which all the wars and revolutions that South America had seen were to seem little more than sanguinary riots. As for those who were to be responsible for the social and political upheaval of a continent, they lived in the meantime their pleasant, easy lives as quietly and as unobtrusively as the most insignificant of the *Imperial's* passengers.

Yet the undercurrent of their existence was not quite so peaceful as its surface, for a very serious question was demanding a speedy settlement one way or the other. Was Captain Hartness to be told the secret of Vilcaroya's past existence and the reason and manner of his return to the world of living things, or was he not? Djama steadily and strenuously insisted that he should not be told, while his sister and the Professor had somehow talked each other into the belief that there could be no harm, and possibly not a little good, in doing so. Ruth had, perhaps, the more decided opinion of the two, though nothing would have been further from the Professor's inclination than to admit that he had been talked into his conviction by a young lady.

Vilcaroya, who, after all, was more deeply concerned than any of them, had but little share in the private discussions which took place every evening in the double cabin which he shared with the Doctor and the Professor. But the night before the steamer entered the Bay of Callao he somewhat astonished them both by quietly but decisively telling them that he wished the English warrior to be his friend and companion, and that therefore if they did not tell him the whole truth, and offer him a share in the expedition, he would do so himself.

"And I," said Ruth, who as usual was present at the conference, "shall tell Captain Hartness that every word of the Inca's story is true as far as we know. Now it's no use frowning and looking black over it, Laurens. As I have said over and over again, Vilcaroya has a perfect right to say who shall or who shall not share this wonderful secret of his, and if Captain Hartness is willing to go with him and help him I don't see that any of us have any right to try and prevent him. Really this prejudice that you seem to have taken against the Captain is much too unreasonable to be worthy of a man of your intellect and perception. I always thought you rather prided yourself on your keenness of perception. What any one can see to object to in Captain Hartness I really can't imagine."

"No, I don't suppose you can," replied her brother with a look and a smile that brought a flash into her eyes and a quick bright flush into her cheeks. "I have always heard that acquaintances ripen very rapidly on board a ship, and I certainly think that we have had a case in point. Let me see, we are seven days out from Panama——"

"Now it's no use frowning and looking black over it, Laurens."

Ruth's dark slender eyebrows came just the slightest shade closer together and her eyes looked just a trifle brighter than usual, but there was not a trace even of vexation in her voice as she answered: "My dear Laurens, that is the first attempt at chaff that I have ever heard from those serious lips of yours. I am afraid I can hardly congratulate you on its brilliance, but I am quite prepared to confess that of all the men I have ever met—not very many to be sure — Captain Hartness is quite the manliest and therefore the nicest; and so I for one should be very glad indeed of his company and protection during our journey among the mountains if he only chooses to come."

"Very well," said Djama in his easiest and pleasantest manner, "I see that public opinion is unanimously against me, and so of course I must bow to the decision of the majority. But as for any prejudice against the Captain, I can assure you you are quite wrong, he is a soldier and a gentleman, and I think a man every inch of him. My objection to telling him the story was first the fact that I have told him an entirely different one, and therefore shall look somewhat of a liar in his eyes, secondly that I have thought, rightly or wrongly, that for the present at least

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it was better to keep this business in as few hands as possible. However, it is decided that we shall tell him, and I have no doubt he will be as discreet as the best of us. Now to make amends for my disagreement, and what I suppose Ruth thinks my unpleasantness, I will go up on deck and find him and bring him in."

He rose from his seat as he spoke and left the cabin. In a few minutes he came back with the captain and said:

"There will be rather a crowd of us in here, and it's pretty hot. Suppose we adjourn to the drawing-room? There's no one there as it happens, and we can get a quiet corner all to ourselves."

This was agreed to, and when they were settled in the luxurious "social hall" on the promenade deck, Djama told the Captain what they had asked him to come for, and then asked the Professor to tell the story.

Hartness gave no sign of surprise beyond a slight lifting of the eyebrows. All he said was:

"I know that you propose to tell me something of no ordinary importance, and before you begin I should like you to allow me to say that nothing is farther from my thoughts than any desire to trespass, in however slight a degree, in your confidence. At the same time, if I can serve any object of yours or of Señor Vilcaroya's, either in hearing it or afterwards, I shall be happy to do so. Of course, I hope I need hardly say that whatever you tell me will be as sacred as a gentleman can keep it."

"We know that, Hartness," replied the Professor. "If we had not been absolutely sure of it we should not have asked you to hear the story."

The Captain bowed slightly in his seat, and then the Professor began in a low but distinct tone, and told him in terse, matter-of-fact sentences the strange tale of the beginning of Vilcaroya's second life, and after that laid before him in brief outline the object of the expedition to Peru, and the intentions of the Inca should it prove successful.

"And now," he said, when he had finished the story, "of course you will see, Hartness, that we have not decided to tell you this without an object. Granted always that you believe what may well appear to you as the wildest romance, do you feel inclined to join us, supposing you can find nothing better to do when you get to Callao?"

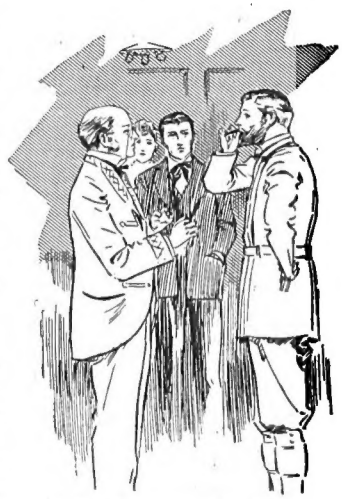
Left the cabin.

There was silence for a moment or two, and then Hartness looked up and saw Ruth's eyes turned on him with an expression that he had never seen in them before.

"As for believing your story, my dear Lamson," he said very quietly, "I may say that I have guessed a good deal of it since we left Panama, and so I am ready to believe the rest. With regard to your proposal, I accept it without a moment's hesitation, and if the ship was met with a deputation in Callao to-morrow offering me the presidency of Peru, with all the plunder appertaining thereto, I should respectfully decline to stay, so that's settled. Now, if I may make a suggestion, we'd better not prolong this conversation here, for someone may come in any minute. I propose that we adjourn to the saloon and drink a bottle of Irroy to the success of the expedition, and the health of his Imperial Majesty, Vilcaroya the First."

Four days later the party landed on the wretched mole at Mollendo, and the next morning took the train to Arequipa.

A great mental change had now apparently come over Vilcaroya, nor was the cause of it very far to seek. Day after day on the southward voyage he had walked alone up and down the promenade-deck, or stood gazing rapt in thought at the desert foreshore along which the steamer was running, and at the colossal masses of the dark brown, barren mountains, as they towered, range beyond range, till they overtopped the clouds themselves, and stood serene and sharply outlined against the blue background of the upper sky.



"Do you feel inclined to join us?"

Behind those mighty ramparts lay the well-loved, well-remembered land over which his fathers had ruled in the good days before the stranger and the oppressor had come. On the other side of them he would find, as he too well knew, only the poor fragments of the great cities and stately pleasure-houses that he had known in all their pride and beauty—only the silent and deserted ruins of the mighty fortresses which had guarded the confines of the Inca empire from the incursions of the wild tribes which surrounded it, and furnished portals through which the armies of the Children of the Sun had marched to unvarying conquest. He had thought of the broad green level plain of Cajamarca surrounded by its guardian ramparts of terraced hills; of the long verdant valley of Cuzco, with its hundred towns and villages nestling amidst the foliage that shaded their streets and squares, and looking out over the green fields of the valley and the innumerable tiers of terraces that rose green and gold with maize, or glowing with flowers to the summits of the hills, and of that earthly paradise of Yucay wherein the Gardens of the Sun, the golden shrines of his lost religion, and the wondrous pleasure-palaces of many generations of Incas glowed in their almost unearthly beauty, embosomed in green, and gold, and scarlet in the midst of inaccessible mountains which themselves were overtopped by the mighty peaks of eternal snow that he had seen glimmering white and ghostly in the moonlight like guardian spirits around an enchanted realm on many a night of delicious revelry now far past and lost in the swift flood of years that had rolled by since then.

It was to the poor remnants of all these glories that he was now returning to find the habitation of his ancestors laid waste, and the descendants of his people the slaves of strangers. The change which it had taken centuries to accomplish would be to him but the transformation of a day and a night and a morning. He had seen the last day of the Inca empire; he had fallen asleep, and he had awakened, and now, on the morrow of his sleep, he was coming back to the ruins which the slow pitiless work of the years and centuries had left behind it.

But no sooner did his feet tread the soil that had once been sacred to his father and deity the Sun, and his lips breathe the same air that they had breathed in his other life, than he remembered the ancient prophecy to whose fulfilment he had devoted himself, even to death, and how in him and this new life of his one part at least of that prophecy had already come to pass—and if one part, and that not the least, why not the rest? Far away beyond those towering tiers of mountains lay Golden Star in the resting-place to which she had been borne with him, sleeping soundly in the impassive embrace of their mighty arms.

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And within the safe keeping of those arms there lay, too, that uncounted treasure, that vast legacy which the departed leaders of his people had bequeathed to him for the sacred purpose of restoring those glories which all men save himself now believed to be but a dream of the distant past, that incomparable inheritance of which he was the sole heir on earth, and which he had come to share with Golden Star on the restored throne of the great Huayni-Capac.

As he thought of all this the blood that had been so long stagnant during his magical death-sleep pulsed like living fire through his veins. His new life, with all its marvels, became glorified into a waking vision of new conquests and re-won empire. The past was a dream both sweet and bitter in its vivid memories, but still a dream that had been dreamt and was done with. The present and the future were realities, golden and glorious with a hope justified by the miracle that had made them possible. He had learned enough of the new age in which he had awakened to know that that lust of gold which had brought the conqueror and the oppressor into the land of the Children of the Sun burnt every whit as fiercely in the hearts of the men who were living in his new world, and that lust should now work for him and for the redemption of his people, and so that which had been their ruin should yet prove their salvation.

Stood gazing rapt in thought.

Thus through the long sunny days and starlit nights Vilcaroya, last of the Incas, had mused and dreamed, and now he was once more in the Land of the Four Regions, hale and strong and burning with the divine ardour of his sacred mission, ready to dare and do all things and to use unsparingly the tremendous power that would soon be in his hands to fulfil his oath and Golden Star's, and accomplish the work that he had come through the grave and gate of death to do.

End of Book I.

BOOK II.

For Love and Gold.

[With the landing of Vilcaroya and his strangely-acquired friends in Peru the diary of Professor Lawson, to which I am indebted for all the facts and most of the suggestions in the foregoing Book, suddenly and quite unaccountably breaks off, or perhaps I should rather say, expands into a mass of notes, archæological and geographical, unconnected by the slightest thread of narrative. Probably the learned Professor lost interest in the human element of his surroundings when he found himself once more on his favourite field of research; possibly, too, his near approach to what he doubtless believed would be illimitable wealth had by this time killed his interest in the wonderful destiny of the man whom his friend had, as it were, brought from the sixteenth into the nineteenth century. Happily, however, so far from the after-history of the Inca Vilcaroya being lost, it comes to us from the best and most interesting of all sources—his own hand. The manuscript, of which the following chapters are a translation, is written in his own Quichua tongue, and has been rendered into English for me, with such alterations of arrangement and expression as have been found necessary, by my learned friend, Professor Adolf Bandalier, of Lima.]

CHAPTER VIII.

The Inca's Oath.

As the time passes between dreaming and waking, so for me did the long years pass, flowing like a smooth and silent stream seen from afar, out of the darkness that fell so slowly and so sweetly over my eyes that night when I sank into the death-trance beside Golden Star, my beloved, in the bridal chamber that they made for us in the Temple of the Sun, into the light that shone into them when they opened upon a scene so different, and saw a white, haggard face bending over me, and two black, burning eyes looking into them. Then I closed them again and slept, and when I woke again there were two faces looking at me, both white and full of fear and wonder, and I saw two beings who seemed very strange to me, such as I had never seen among the Children of the Sun, standing by the couch on which I lay, and one of them fell down as though sore stricken, and I tried to think what this could mean, and thinking fell asleep again.

Then I dreamt a long sweet dream of the days that I now know were far past, when I, Vilcaroya, son of the great Huayni-Capac, lived in the Land of the Four Regions, a prince among princes, a warrior and a child of the sacred race whose blood had flowed unmixed through many generations from the divine fountain of life and light, our father the Sun. I dreamt of Golden Star, and the days when I loved her in timid silence, for she was the fairest of all our race, and so, as it seemed to me, destined to no less a lot than the motherhood of a long line of Incas, in whom should live, and grow to ever greater splendour, the glories of the race that owned no earthly origin.

I called to her in my dream, but she made no answer. I saw her lying by my side in that well-remembered chamber with the shadowy forms of the priests standing about us as I had seen them long before; but, alas, she lay still with closed eyes and lips that seemed to have forgotten how sweetly they once could smile. I whispered her name, mingled with many a loving word, into her ear, and still she moved not. I put my arms about her, and kissed her, and instantly I shrank back, shivering with a fear unspeakable for the form that should have been so warm and soft and yielding was chilled and pulseless, and rigid, as though some foul magic had changed it into stone, and the lips that should have given me back kiss for kiss were still, and cold, and senseless.

Then I saw, as it seemed with half-closed eyes, that dear shape of hers being borne away from me, while I, longing to snatch her from the hands of those who were robbing me of her, yet lay helpless on the couch without strength to move or speak until all grew dim around me, and I felt myself raised by invisible hands, and borne far away through the darkness, and so my dream melted away into the night of sleep.

Then, yet again, I woke and saw the two strange men that I had seen before, and one came and spoke to me kindly in my own tongue, and called me by my own name, and gave me food and drink, and told me in few, but to me terrible words that the dreams I had dreamed were dreams indeed—dreams of a time that was long past, of things that had passed away, perchance for ever, and men and women whose names were only memories.

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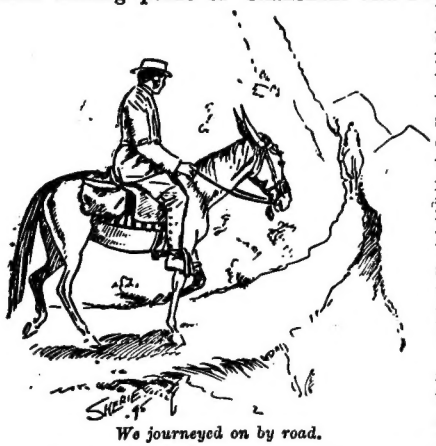
Thus did I come from the evening of one age into the morning of another, falling asleep in the prime of my strength and manhood, and waking again even as I had fallen asleep—though those who had closed my eyes had been dead for many generations, and the name of our ancient race was but a bitter memory to the sons and daughters of my own land amidst the mountains.

Then I went forth into the wondrous new world into which I had awakened, the world which you who read this hold so common, and which I found crowded with wonders so many and marvellous that if it had not been for the loving care of her who guided my first footsteps on my new journey, as she might have guided those of a little child, my re-awakening reason must soon have been quenched in the night of madness.*

So I came back to the shores of that well-loved land of mine which, by the reckoning of the new times into which I had come, had been for more than three hundred years the sport and prey of the generations of strangers and oppressors who had followed those first conquerors of the Children of the Sun, whose coming had sounded the hour of doom and ruin through the length and breadth of that glorious land of green plains and verdant valleys, of terraced hills and towering mountains, which had once been our empire and our home.

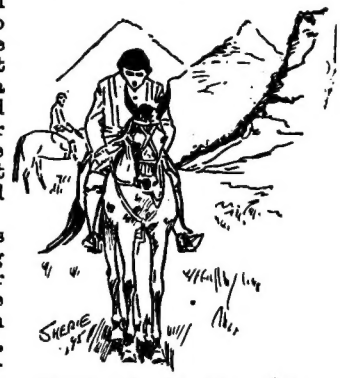
From the mean coast town of wooden houses where the railway begins we travelled ever upward over great grey sloping deserts and by rugged ravines with steep, broken walls of red earth and ragged rock, through range after range of mountains, that were all strange and hateful to me until we swung round the shoulder of a great crag-crowned mountain, and I saw across a vast plain, into which range after range of lesser hills sloped down, the crystal peaks of the snow mountains towering far beyond the clouds into the blue sky above them.

Then I knew that I was coming nearer to the land that had once been mine, and ere many hours had passed we stopped in a great city which still bore its old name of Arequipa, the Place of Rest, which my own ancestors had given to it. It was no longer the place of palaces and pleasure-houses, of flowery gardens and leafy woods that I had seen it, but above it still gleamed the white snowfields and shining peaks of Chanchani and Pichu-Pichu, and between the two great white ranges still towered the vast black snow-crowned cone of Misti, the smoke-mountain, rising sheer in its lonely grandeur twelve thousand feet above the sloping plain on which the city lay.



We journeyed on by road.

As I looked at it again for the first time after so many years I asked the Professor, as we all called him, if since I had been asleep the mountain had been rent asunder again as it had been in the olden times long before the Spaniards came to seek gold and blood in the Land of the Four Regions. He was very learned in such matters, even as Djama, his friend, who had awakened me from my long slumber, was learned in secrets of life and death, and when he told me that the fires within it had slept for more years than men could remember, I was glad—yet I said nothing of my inward joy, for had I told him all that I knew about the valley of black sand and yellow rock that was hidden behind the far-off wall of snow, that shone so whitely against the blue of the midway heaven, it might have been many a long day before we had again set out on our journey towards the place that was the goal at once of my hopes and fears.



I bowed my bared head towards it.

We stayed seven days in Arequipa, making our last preparations for the work that lay before us, and then we went on again by train to Sicuani, in the valley of the Vilcanota. Then from Sicuani we journeyed on by road, riding on mules through a land that was lovely even in my eyes, though its loveliness was to me only the beauty of ruin and decay, for this was the heart and centre of that vanished empire whose glories no living eyes but mine had ever seen.

I saw wildernesses where there had been gardens, and gaunt treeless mountains lying bare to the glare of the sun. Lakes that had shone encircled with gardens now spread out dull and stagnant over the neglected fields. A few ragged fragments of grey clay walls still rose from the green plain of Cacha, where I had last seen in all its glory of gold and rainbow colours the holy Temple of Viracocha; the great guardian fortress of Piquillacta, which I had seen stretching its impregnable length and rearing its unscaleable height from mountain to mountain, across the entrance to the once lovely valley of Cuzco, lay a huge ragged mass of towering ruins, splendid even in decay.

As we passed through the one half-choked portal that still lay open, I thought with heavy heart and bowed down head of the great fortress as I had seen it in the glory of its pride and strength, of the gallant warriors that had defended it, and the gay processions that I had seen winding in and out of its stately gates, making its hoary walls ring with songs and laughter, and, farther on, as we rode along the valley on that sad and yet eager three days' march of ours, I saw on the hill-spurs about me the black and ragged ruins of the fair cities and stately temples and palaces that I had seen crowded with happy throngs, bright with gold and colours, and so fair and strong that no man could have dreamed of the ruin the oppressor had brought upon them.

And so, journeying amidst all these sad memories through a land which, for me, was peopled with the ghosts of my long-dead friends and kindred, we came out at length on the broad, green Plain of the Oracle, and there before me, still nestling under her guardian hills, lay, glimmering white and grey under the slanting sun-rays, all that was left of the mighty city that had once been Cuzco, the City of the Sun and the home of His children, and as I raised my eyes and gazed upon it through the rising mist of my tears, I bowed my bared head towards it and swore in the sadness and silence of my desolate heart that, to the full extent of the power which I believed was soon to be mine, I would take life for life and blood for blood, and I would give sorrow for sorrow and shame for shame until I had paid to the full the debt which the long years of plunder and cruelty and oppression had heaped up against those who from generation to generation had brought this shame and ruin on the once bright home of the Children of the Sun.

(To be continued.)

* Several pages of the original MS., descriptive of scenes and characters already familiar to the reader, are omitted here.

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A CURE FOR NEGLECT.

She was sobbing bitterly. He was frowning wickedly. They had been married six months.

He had married her because he had fallen in love with her piquant brunette beauty. She had married him because she liked him as well as she liked any of her half-a-dozen suitors.

He was very fond of her still. But he was tired of her constant companionship, so tired of unintermittent conjugal felicity and constantly expressed affection that he almost fancied himself tired of her—of her, the pretty, dainty girl who lay—in the agony of her wifehood's first grief—lay with her silken head buried in the velvet cushions of her boudoir lounge.

She, on the other hand, had fallen in love with her husband. She had grown fond of him in the ardent days of courtship that had preceded the wedding. The warmer ardour of the first honeymoon days had kindled a spark of passionate love that had lain dormant in the girl's heart through two London seasons. The spark fell upon the quickened oil of young wifehood, and a great flame grew—a flame that inwrapped all her being; and this unexpected, burning, eager love had grown and grown with every hour of her wifehood.

Fred had been intensely pleased at first when he saw the big love grow up in his wife's heart. He had had grave misgivings once or twice before their marriage. He knew that Mabel had flirted sadly with Hylard and with other men. He had felt "a cold faint fear" that his preferable bank account had had something to do with her preference for him; but he had put the thought behind him as a man imprudently will when he is in love. Nevertheless it had been an inexpressible relief to learn that of a certainty his wife loved him—loved him with a love that absorbed every thought of her mind, every pulse of her heart.

The first intoxication of love gratified had passed away, and left him temporarily disinclined for further draughts of the sweet liquid.

He wanted a change for a time, and he was going away—going to shoot with some men in Scotland. And Mabel's heart was broken, or she thought it was, which hurts quite as much while it lasts.

"Mabel, dear, do be reasonable," he said, "I'm only going away for two weeks."

"If you loved me you wouldn't go at all."

Duncan groaned. He was face to face with one of the great difficulties of a man's life—the difficulty of teaching a woman that the love which is her "whole existence," is of man's "but a part"—of teaching her this without hurting her—of teaching her that this great sexual difference is a righteous, affectional dispensation.

"It's only a stag party," he began. The girl sprang to her feet, and her flashing black eyes were so beautiful that he felt half inclined to throw over the hunting party and stay with her.

"Only a stag party!" she cried; "I should hope so! If you were going without me to a place where there were other women, I'd kill you!"

He caught his pretty wife in his arms. He was going away in five minutes. He could stand a bit more love-making. He almost felt inclined for it.

"Mrs. Othello! Mrs. Othello!" he whispered, lifting the lovely tear-stained face to his. "My jealous darling! Now, for my part, I'm as trustful as Desdemona. I want you to have the best possible time while I'm away. Accept all your invitations. Spend heaps of money—you haven't bought a new frock since we've been married, have you? Don't you be dull, girly, because I've gone for a two weeks' shoot at the beginning of the season. Go everywhere; see everything. I'm sure Hylard will be delighted to play escort to you anywhere. You see, I'm not jealous. And I haven't forgotten how keen Hylard was to marry you."

Mabel drew back indignantly. Then she did what every woman does when it comes to an issue between her and the man she loves. She yielded—as Cleopatra yielded when Antony left her at the bidding of Cæsar. She threw her arms about Duncan's neck and kissed him.

"I hope you'll have a lovely time, Fred, darling," she said. "And, oh!" with a half-controlled sob, "remember every moment you're away that Mabel loves you—Mabel loves you."

* * * * *

Duncan stayed in Scotland three weeks instead of two. Then a great sudden longing to see his wife caused him to catch the first train for London.

When he entered his own hall the first thing he saw was a wonderful opera cloak that lay across the table. Then Mabel came out of the drawing-room door. Mabel, in a marvellous yellow dress, all satin and chiffon. The great Duncan diamonds flashed from every conceivable part of her person. Her bridal pearls were twisted carelessly in her hair. They were half hidden by a great jewelled butterfly.

"You!" she cried. "I'm afraid the dinner is all cold. But you can tell them to get you something quickly. I'm going out. I've three receptions and a ball. Don't sit up. Lord Hylard will see me home. Don't crush my flowers," she added, almost avoiding his kiss. She held up a magnificent bouquet. "Wasn't it nice of Lord Hylard to send me such a beauty? Did you have a good time, dear? Isn't my gown incomparable? I hope you won't be cross when you see the bill! The carriage? Yes, Binks, I'm coming."

She handed Duncan her long, elaborate wrap, and he helped her into it in a dazed way. "Binks, see that your master has something to eat," she said carelessly, and passed out.

That was three years ago. Duncan is a little laughed at now for clinging so closely to his wife's side. She, on the contrary, is very gay, and just the least neglectful of him. Often she stays his kisses with the cry "Don't crush my gown." He longs bitterly for the lavish girlish love he once spurned. Often in the night, when he sleeps, she lifts the yellow curls, and lays her sweet lips with passionate kisses on his forehead.

Is she foolish to hide part of her love from him? No; she is wise. If he knew how much she loved him he would love her less.

Is she unjust? No. He spurned the absorbing love he had voluntarily created. He deserves a life-long punishment. Is the man less guilty who breeds in a woman's heart a great love, and then neglects to feed it with kind words and loving acts? No; not a whit.

E. C. Waggener.

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A CLEVER CAPTURE

TO capture a slaver had, at one period of his life, been the great idea and dream of ambition in the breast of Commander Warner. But that was many years ago when he had for the first time donned Her Majesty's uniform as a midshipman in the essentially maritime town of Portsmouth. Time had gone on and he had steadily worked his way upwards, and now, at length, the object of his youthful desire was actually within his reach—chances of accomplishing it, moreover, were well within the bounds of possibility, seeing that he had recently been appointed to the command of a small armed cruiser whose destination was a coast where the authorities had reason to believe an illicit trade was being carried on in the way of slave dealing. His orders were to cruise in certain waters, and, if possible, intercept one or other of the suspected vessels.

In these piping times of peace, there is not so much chance for earning prize money in H.M. Navy as was the case formerly, and the prospect of "making a bit" was no less alluring, probably, to the officers than to the crew of the *Lapwing*, so that it is not to be wondered at that all through the outward passage the feeling on board the cruiser was one of pleasant expectation, and that a general alacrity to obey orders with willingness and despatch was more than usually apparent.

Once arrived in the blazing atmosphere of the tropics, however, things became different. For the first few days the anticipation that any day a suspicious craft might come in sight served to stimulate the spirits of all on board, but after a while, during which nothing eventful had occurred, a general feeling of listlessness prevailed. Well it might, seeing the excessive heat existing, and when not on duty the crew were quite content to do their best to keep themselves from bodily melting away without troubling much about anything else.

One day, however, a shout from the masthead of "Sail ho!" effectually dispelled the existing feeling of lethargy, and the Captain, who had gone below in the hopes of finding his cabin cooler than the deck, hastily appeared.

"Where away?"

"A couple of points on the port bow, sir."

"What do you make of her, Mr. Graves?" was the Captain's anxious inquiry of the first lieutenant, who, glass in hand, had been carefully scanning the stranger ever since she had been sighted, until, the wind being light, and the *Lapwing's* engineer having, in compliance with the Captain's order, gone ahead full steam, the distance between the stranger—a long three-masted schooner, with tall raking masts and lying low in the water—and H.M. cruiser had been sensibly diminished, and the two vessels were now within range of each other.

"She is a flyer, sir, I'm thinking, and if she can only get a bit of breeze she will as likely as not get away from us yet."

"She shan't sheer off without disclosing her name and nationality," replied the Captain, with a look of determination about his lips which did not betoken too favourably as to the schooner's reception.

"Mr. Johnson," to an officer standing by.

"Yes, sir?"

"Give the order to fire a blank cartridge, and signal to her to give her name and nationality."

"Aye, aye, sir."

In another instant the sullen boom of the gun rang out over the water, and almost immediately the schooner hoisted the American colours.

"She is bearing away, sir," was the report of a warrant officer, saluting as he spoke.

"The deuce she is; that game won't pay, I can tell her.

"Reload your gun, Mr. Johnson, and put a shot in. Signal again for her name, colours won't do for me."

The order was obeyed, but elicited no response.

"Fire a shot—well in front of her bows."

Again the boom of the gun rang out, but there was a distinct difference in the sound; instead of a loud report only, as before, the second discharge was accompanied with an ominous growl, as if to say: "Now, then, no nonsense, you know."

The effect was little short of magical. There was a hurrying and scurrying on the schooner's deck; first one flag was run up, then another, until when the signal was completed those on the cruiser could make out that together they denoted a name the *Black Swan*.

"H'm, a mighty suggestive title. Just look up the U.S. Merchant Registry, Mr. Graves."

"No such name here, sir," was the answer, in an excited tone.

"Very well, then—signal to her to heave to, lower a boat, and take half-a-dozen men with you, Mr. Graves, board her, show your authority, and demand to inspect her papers. If they are in order make the best excuse you can, and return at once; but keep your eyes about you and note anything which seems suspicious—above all be circumspect whatever you do; I don't want a wigging from the Admiralty."

"Aye, aye, sir;" and in less than a minute one of the cruiser's boats manned with the officer and six men had been lowered, and the crew, bending to their work with a will, were soon alongside the schooner.

With the eye of a practised seaman Lieutenant Graves took in all that was noticeable about her at a glance, and in addition to noting that she was unmistakably a fast sailer, there was a generally rakish look about her that did not inspire his confidence.

He was received politely by an easy-going individual, clad in light nautical costume and speaking with a strong American accent.

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"Guess yonder boat is a Britisher."

"She is H.M. cruiser *Lapwing*, and I have come on board to see your papers, if you please."

"Certainly, there they are," and he handed them over. They appeared to be in order, and the Lieutenant thought it well to be cautious.

"What's your cargo, may I ask?"

"Dry goods generally."

"I couldn't find any *Black Swan* in the Registry."

"Couldn't ye, now. Wal, you see, this here is a new craft, and we, not long bein' in command, haven't had time to christen her properly yet, but there's a bit of wind coming up, I guess, and I've been here about long enough, so if you're satisfied p'raps you'll go back the way you came."

"But I'm not satisfied."

"Is that so, Mister?"

"Yes, it is," replied the Lieutenant, exasperated by the other's slow, aggravating manner. "I want to have a look at your cargo, so kindly give orders to knock the hatches off."

"I guess I'll do nothing of the sort, Mister. I don't know what right you have to come aboard a United States merchantman and demand to inspect the cargo as if I was a tarnation slaver, and I can tell ye there'll be more heard of this before I've done. I shall report the whole circumstance, and the quicker you take boat the better."

In face of this, practically speaking, command, the Lieutenant had no alternative but to obey, and in a short space of time had regained the deck of the *Lapwing*.

"What's your news?"

The Lieutenant detailed what had occurred, and wound up by saying: "I am convinced, in my own mind, she is a slaver, sir."

"But you say her papers were in order."

"Apparently, sir."

"Then I can do nothing, I am afraid. Did you notice which course she was taking?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, then, lay our head in the same direction. We may come up with her again in the morning. There's only a light wind, and she can't get away far in the night."

There was considerable discussion amongst the crew, before turning in for the night, as to the probabilities of ever seeing the *Black Swan* again, and the interest was intensified by one of the boat's crew stating most positively that the schooner had at some time borne a name on her stern, and that it had evidently been painted out early in the morning. All doubts that might have existed as to again viewing the schooner were dispelled, as there, right ahead of the cruiser, lay the *Black Swan*, and the wind having died away, she was practically becalmed.

The Captain hastily came on deck on hearing the welcome news, and at once ordered the engineer to go full steam ahead.

"Signal to her to heave to, Mr. Graves, and if she doesn't, fire a shot across her bows."

There was no need, as it happened, to resort to any such drastic measures, the schooner, in response to the signal, coming head to wind at once and remaining stationary, presumably divining the Captain's intention and thus notifying her skipper's willingness to receive a second visit from the *Lapwing*.

"Ha! that's sensible, now; the fellow knows he has no chance of getting away in this light breeze, and is going to make the best of a bad job and surrender. Give orders to lower the pinnace, Mr. Graves, and take a full boat's complement, well armed; you never know in these cases; that chap may make a fight of it, after all."

On boarding the schooner the second time, the Lieutenant's reception was altogether different to what it had been before—a younger man than he had seen on the last occasion deferentially awaited his arrival on the deck, and announced himself as in temporary command, the skipper, he explained, being below.

"I mean having your hatches off this time," was the Lieutenant's opening remark.

"I beg your pardon, but I am not accustomed to be spoken to in this way."

"Well, whether you are or not, that's nothing to do with me. I demand the removal of those hatches, and here's my authority; are you going to let your crew remove them or must I summon my men to do so for you?"

"I shall certainly not comply with such an unreasonable request. You can do what you like," turning on his heel as he spoke.

Five or six of the schooner's crew had in the meantime gathered round, and the Lieutenant hesitated for a moment, mindful of the caution his commander had given him—"don't do anything rash, whatever you do," but his blood was up, and, leaning over the ship's side, he gave the order for a score of his men to come aboard.

Needless to say the order was obeyed with alacrity.

"Now, my lads, off with those hatches."

Two score of strong hands obeyed the mandate willingly enough. No sooner had the first hatch been removed than the sickening effluvia which ascended was enough to proclaim the truth. Several hundred slaves were stowed away as closely as herrings in a barrel.

"Now, sir," with a tone of exultation, "perhaps you will admit my suspicions were not unfounded?"

The young officer made no direct reply.

"It is, I believe, sir, the custom of your country to treat prisoners of war with humanity. I and my crew are in your hands. All I ask is that we be not subjected to the indignity of being put under restraint until, at all events, we reach the nearest port, to which I presume it is your intention to convey us. And I would esteem it a particular favour if you would allow us to remain on board our own vessel. Our crew is only a small one—twelve all told—and you can easily spare a sufficient number of men from your vessel to navigate this schooner, and," with a smile, "act as guard over us."

The Lieutenant was an officer and an English gentleman to boot, and was not disposed to crow over a vanquished foe.

"The disposition of the schooner's crew, sir, is a matter for my commander to settle, but I will represent your wishes to him."

To signal the fact of the capture to the *Lapwing* did not occupy long, and so near were the vessels to each other that the ringing cheer which went up from the excited crew still remaining on the cruiser could be plainly heard, and was heartily responded to by their elated companions on the schooner.

"I congratulate you most heartily, Mr. Graves, on the way in which you have carried this matter through; how many men will you want, do you think, to work the schooner into port, and leave a sufficient number to be responsible for the crew?"

"I was thinking, sir, that, subject to your approval, the better plan would be to take her in tow. We have

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a good supply of coal left, and, the wind being so variable, we may be some days making the nearest port."

"An admirable suggestion on your part. Yes, that will be by far the best, and then it will only be necessary to put a guard on board."

Shortly after the schooner, with her living cargo, was being towed astern the *Lapwing*, and in the course of less than a week had been triumphantly taken into port. The advent of the two vessels was, as might have been expected, the cause of considerable excitement; but the climax arrived when the U.S. maritime representative boarded the *Lapwing*, and cordially thanked her commander for having assisted the officers and men of the U.S. man-of-war *Warspite* to bring their prize into port.

The whole mystery was cleared up by the appearance soon afterwards of the easy-going individual whom Lieutenant Graves had seen on the first occasion, no longer attired in loose, easy-fitting flannels, but in all the resplendency of a U.S. naval uniform.

"Guess you're considerable smart, Mr. Graves, but you didn't ask me who I was when you came aboard the first time; otherwise, I might have saved you a lot of trouble, and told you how my boat, the *Warspite*, like yourselves, on the look-out for slavers, fell in with the *Black Swan*, when the Captain sent an officer aboard, your humble servant, in fact, just as yours did subsequently, and finding out what her cargo was, I obtained permission to transfer her crew aboard our own ship, and put 'em in irons. The Captain then assigned me a dozen of our own men to work her into port here, which you've kindly done for us. When you hailed us first, I guessed what was up, and we rigged ourselves up in some old clothes belonging to the original Captain and crew of the slaver. I was bound to make a bit of a pretence about not allowing you to uncover the hatches just for the fun of the thing, you know, thinking what a joke it would be to explain after, and if you had not insisted so peremptorily as you did, I meant, after a little palaver, to have given in as my first officer did later on. We guessed you'd follow us up; still, all's well that ends well; and if we can do you a similar turn some day, I shall be only too pleased. Slave-catching's a funny game, I guess."

"But what about the name being painted out?"

"Oh, yes; the slaver chap did that, not us; why should we?"

What Commander Warner said, *sotto voce*, had better be omitted.

S. J. F. Newbery.

An Arrant Coward

Ceylon is a country where matrimonial relations are apt to get a trifle strained. The usual opinion is that the climate is mostly at fault. So it was generally assumed by a society which could not afford to throw many stones indiscriminately, that the climate was to blame for the trouble between the Dexters.

It appears, according to experts, that a good deal depends on seasoning. The first two or three years are the trying ones. After that the matrimonial cart may be expected to go smoothly. That is why some men marry daughters of the land, or girls born on the island, in preference to importing wives from home. The unmarried man is wise in his generation, and tries to avoid running risks.

But Dexter had been foolish enough to become engaged to a girl at home, and in due course he married her. This interesting event happened at the end of his six months' leave, and he came back with his bride and set her down in the midst of his plantation, just as he would have brought a new kind of shrub and expect it to grow naturally in its new surroundings.

He was a reserved, passionless sort of man, who had never wasted much thought on the other sex, and it really did not occur to him that he was engaged in a risky experiment. He knew something, and had heard more, of what was going on round him. But it did not come within the range of his ideas that his wife should follow the example of other men's wives.

Mrs. Dexter was a very attractive little body, as was speedily discovered. At first she was rather taken aback by the novelty of her position, and was shy with her husband's old friends. As for the women-folk, she was not long in taking their measure and putting them on a proper footing. But with the male portion of society she was not so exacting or discriminating.

Anyhow, as time went on, the Dexters' house became a gathering place for several men, but very few women. Dexter himself did not seem to notice the distinction. All he noticed was that his wife kept up her spirits well after the first inevitable home sickness, and that she never complained of feeling lonely. He was not a very observant man.

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If Mrs. Dexter had been wise, she would have taken care to divide her attentions. There is safety in numbers, and she really meant no harm. But she was young and inexperienced, and the man was neither. This happened about six months after the arrival of the little woman, and at a time when, as luck would have it, Dexter was more than usually busy.

The man had contrived to clear the field of rivals. He was not a particularly nice sort, though he was on such good terms with Mrs. Dexter. As regards reputation, he was one of the best hated men in the district—by husbands. And the strange thing was that he was not a good-looking man. On the contrary, he was rather ugly. Perhaps it was his swagger and bounce that proved irresistible.

It became a matter of course for him to be in constant attendance on Mrs. Dexter. Not a day passed that they did not spend almost entirely together, walking, riding, or driving. The people in the neighbourhood looked on with interest. They expected a repetition of the old story. And in the nature of things it happened that the husband was the only person ignorant of the threatening tragedy.

One day, however, Dexter was suddenly brought to his senses by a chance remark. It was not intended for his ears, but he heard it, and it went home. He followed its example, and having arrived at his own house, sat on the verandah and considered the situation for an hour and a half. At the end of that time he inquired for his wife. She was out, as usual, with the man; and the servant who answered his question seemed to treat the event as in the usual order of things.

Dexter did not try to obtain any more information. He simply went to his room and changed his clothes, rummaging about as if in search of something. Then he came out, looking quite cheerful, lighted a cheroot, and asked which way Mrs. Dexter had gone. Having learned this, he walked briskly in the direction indicated.

In the meantime Mrs. Dexter and the man were sitting together in a favourite dell, about half a mile away. She was rapidly approaching the stage where folly ends and guilt begins. Whether she would ever actually have transgressed is a delicate point. She had resisted the voice of the tempter successfully so far, greatly to the tempter's chagrin.

They had, in fact, reached a positive difficulty. He was getting rather angry, and she was not exactly happy, so that it was something of a relief to both of them to hear some one approaching. They neither of them expected Dexter. He was supposed to be some miles away, shooting.

Unfortunately, their calculations were wrong, for it happened to be Dexter who disturbed their solitude. He knew his way well, and came straight into the opening, to find them sitting side by side on a fallen tree; and when he saw them he stopped for a moment and looked at them, a grim smile on his face.

They both saw him at the same instant. The man jumped up hastily. As for Mrs. Dexter, she uttered a slight scream. The husband was the coolest of the three.

He walked up to them slowly, with the smile gradually effacing itself. The man was far from happy. He saw danger in the pale face and steady eyes, and under his swagger he was, like most of his class, as arrant a coward as ever walked.

Mrs. Dexter simply sat still where she was, her eyes glancing alternately from the man to her husband and back again. After her first exclamation she did not utter a syllable.

Dexter did not waste many words.

"You confounded blackguard," he said.

The man had expected something more violent. Then, cur-like, he began to pluck up courage. He even began to swagger a little, as usual, and stood up straighter. But Mrs. Dexter, who was watching him closely, noticed that his hand trembled as he curled his moustache.

"I have been thinking the matter over," Dexter continued, "and it seems to me that one or other of us is superfluous. I can only see the one way to settle the difficulty. Here we have a fine, open spot, well lighted, and in every way desirable. We have also a couple of weapons, and, in addition, a lady to give the signal."

As he spoke, he produced from his coat pockets a brace of revolvers. "They are exactly similar and both are loaded. Pray examine them and make your choice. Then we will agree to a distance and begin."

He grasped both pistols and held them out to his opponent, looking him keenly in the face the while. Mrs. Dexter had risen and walked up to them. Husband and wife kept their eyes fixed on the man's face.

But the man did not offer to take the revolvers into his hand. His swagger had gone. His cheeks shook like a jelly fresh from the mould, his lips worked convulsively, and his hands quivered. As Dexter moved nearer to him, he drew back, shrinking from the outstretched pistols.

And Dexter smiled.

Mrs. Dexter did not smile. Her face suddenly became crimson. Then, with an irresistible impulse, she clenched her fist and struck the man smartly across the mouth.

"Coward!" she exclaimed.

The word seemed to cut him like a knife. He staggered back a pace or two, gazed blankly from one to the other, and then fled.

They listened to his retreating footsteps without speaking. Then Dexter quietly put the revolvers back into his pockets, and turned on his heels to go home.

As he did so, he looked back over his shoulder to where his wife stood, with her face buried in her hands.

"Is there any reason why you should not come with me?" he asked.

She lifted her head, and for a moment her eyes flashed with indignation, and her face became red with sudden anger. Then, as quickly, she subdued the feeling.

"You have the right to ask," she answered humbly. "No, there is no reason."

And then he put his arm round her, and they went home together.

G. F. B.

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A WAXEN HEAD.

A Study of Madness.

Yes, I killed him.

But why? you ask. Ah, that is the question. The judge, the lawyers, and the jury cannot tell. They have ascribed all manner of motives to me. They have said that I was brutal and cold-blooded from my birth—a moral monster. Wrong—I am gentle almost to timidity. They have said that there was a woman in the case. Wrong—I scarcely knew the man, and knew no woman whom he knew. My advocate has said that I am mad, and that the waxen head reminded me of some woman whom I had loved. Wrong—I never loved but one, and she was dark.

The head, you will notice, is that of a blonde.

Yes, I killed him, and for what you will think a trifle—because he refused to remove a waxen image from the window of his hair-dressing shop.

Odd, was it not?

Let me tell you the story. I was poor—miserably poor. I had come to the great city, as come so many men, in search of employment. Anything, whether hand-work or brain-work, would I willingly have done. But work I could not get. The first day I went to seventeen places. They were sorry there was no opening; possibly there might be; would I call again? and I was politely ushered out.

I waited. I called again. I was again rebuffed—a little less politely than before. I went to other places. The same experience. In all the great city there seemed no work for me to do.

I was gradually spending the small stock of money I had brought with me—all I had in the world. Finally it was gone. I pawned what few articles of jewellery I had, and continued my quest for work. At last I received some. It was copying, at a miserable pittance, but it was work.

My humble lodging was in a dingy street, and directly opposite was a hair-dresser's shop. In the window was an object, the sight of which annoyed me. In this life you meet persons who are repugnant to you, as well as those whom you like. To one of a sensitive nature, like myself, the same rule applies to inanimate objects. Even for tables and chairs I have my likes and dislikes.

I crossed the street, and examined the object of my dislike. It was nothing—nothing but a Waxen Head. But it was disagreeable. It looked like a real head—a head cut from a body. It was not a bust, such as hair-dressers ordinarily have, but a simple head, cut off at the neck, and placed on a shelf, with a background of coarse, red cloth. A flowing blonde wig was upon it, and its glassy eyes had a metallic lustre. There was a mechanical smiled upon its painted lips—a disagreeable smile. Almost a contemptuous smile. And I could not help thinking that the Thing looked superciliously at me.

It looked like a real head.

I finished the copying I had, and went for more. None to be had. Again I went my weary round. No work. Dispirited and melancholy, I returned to my lonely room. It was after dark. The hair-dresser's window was faintly illuminated by a sickly, spluttering lamp. But in the darkness there shone out two brilliant points of light.

They were the eyes of the Waxen Head.

I began to grow alarmed, despite myself. Could the Thing be acting on my brain? Was I in danger of madness? But no; what folly; I would not look upon it. I would avoid gazing out of the window. For a week I would not let my eyes fall upon it. But it was not without an effort. I experienced veritable tugs at times, pulling me round to look at the Waxen Head. But I resisted.

At last one night I was returning home just after dark. The window was not lighted; I was safe. Just as I reached the front of the shop a lamplighter touched a street lamp near by. The flame shot from the jet, the light fell upon the window. Starting out of the darkness I saw a mocking head.

I could not restrain myself. I entered the shop, determined to make the owner remove the hideous Thing. As I crossed the threshold a smug fellow advanced, bowing, smirking, and rubbing his hands.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"Nothing," said I; "that is, nothing in the—what a very singular head you have there in the window."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"Yes. Can it be possible that it is of any use to you?"

"Oh, yes; it serves to attract customers, and to display wigs. And then, you know, it is one of the accessories of our business."

"But," said I hotly, "why do you not have a bust? You certainly should have a bust." He was staring at me. I went on more calmly. "Besides, with a bust, a handsome pair of shoulders, a necklace or something of the kind, your window would look much more attractive."

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"Very true, sir," he replied, "but such things cost money, and money, sir, is not very plentiful in this shop."

I grew excited again. I could not help it. "I do not care," said I; "that object there looks like a genuine head—a human head. There are people whom such things affect. A nervous shock might be caused——"

He burst into a roar of laughter.

I changed my tone. I became humble. I admitted that the head produced a sinister impression on me, and begged him to remove it.

"Why," said he, "if you are so nervous, you had better change your lodgings. It is easy to do that. I do not see why I should injure my business on account of your whims."

He was right. I could not rightfully ask him to do it. But change my lodgings—what a bitter jest! I could not pay for those I had, much less secure new ones, with payment in advance required. I went out dejectedly, my head bent, and left the thing still in the window. And yet they call me ferocious!

But my torture was only begun. The barber told his neighbours of my visit. I became a show for the giggling shopkeepers. They would watch for my goings and comings, and when I passed the window, with averted face, they would chuckle and sneer. Even the little children would point their fingers at me, and their childish trebles would join the sneering laughter of the elder fools.

One day my friend Arnold came to see me—the only friend I had in the great city. He brought good news—he had secured a place for me as clerk in an office. The pay was wretchedly small, but it was a place. I could have wept for joy. I pressed Arnold's hand convulsively, and thanked him as few men are thanked. I was to take the place in two days. He left me a happy man.

The next evening I was seated in my room. It was cold, and I was shivering, for I had no fire. It was the 20th of February. Oh, yes, I remember the date. I can never forget it. As I sat there, thinking over my unexpected good fortune, and pinching myself, partly to keep warm and partly to be sure I was awake, I heard a knock. I opened the door. A letter. I unfolded it and read:

Dear Sir,—We regret to inform you that the position which was secured for you in our employ by Mr. Arnold is no longer vacant. It has been filled by the appointment of a relative of one of the members of the firm.—Yours very truly, ———

I crumpled the letter convulsively in my hand. The room began to whirl round me. I staggered and fell to the floor.

When I recovered my senses a new and strange light fell upon my dazed eyes. The curtain was drawn, but still the light came through. Mechanically I pulled aside the curtain to see what it could be; I recoiled. For the barber had fitted up his window with gas-jets, and in the centre of an aureola of ten lights appeared the Waxen Head.

I glanced at it. There was the same haughty look from its glassy eyes, the same sneering smile upon its painted lips. They moved—I vow I saw them move.

With a hoarse cry I bounded from the room. In two seconds I was in the villain's shop.

"Scoundrel!" I hissed, "you have mocked at me—you shall never again have the chance."

"Pooh!" said he insolently; "what's the matter with you? Go and sleep the drink off."

There was a sneer upon his fool's face as he spoke.

A knife came to my hand.

There was no sneer upon his white face when he died.

Jerome Hart.

A Strange Request

Some years ago I was spending a few weeks in Paris. My business had been successfully accomplished, but I still lingered on, awaiting the arrival of my old college friend and chum—Maurice Owen. We had not met for many years, but this was entirely owing to circumstances which had cast our lives apart. At the time I refer to I was expecting my friend the next day, and wondered how I could best while away the intervening time.

While pondering this question, my attention was attracted by a large placard announcing that a masked costume ball would be held that evening at the Maison Foisson, Rue de la Concorde. For a moment I hesitated, but my decision was soon made. What better could I do to pass a few hours? I retraced my steps and sought the shop of Maître Pierre, where I knew that a large choice of costumes could always be had on demand.

Maître Pierre showed me a variety of fancy costumes, but none of them were to my liking.

"Ah!" he suddenly exclaimed, rubbing his fat hands together, "I have the very thing for Monsieur. See here, only this morning the gentleman who ordered two costumes of Hamlet a week ago, returned one, saying he would not require both, but he paid for them, and well, too."

It was the very thing I wanted, and fitted me to perfection. After selecting a suitable mask, I left the shop, well satisfied with my purchases.

On entering the ballroom at ten o'clock that night, I looked round with some interest to discover my double, but as far as I could see I was the only representative of Hamlet then present.

I amused myself for some time by watching the dancers as they glided swiftly past, and wondered what secret joys and tragedies the masks concealed. My attention was suddenly arrested by a light pressure on

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my arm, and turning round I found myself face to face with the Hamlet of my previous speculations.

"Pardon me for addressing you," the unknown exclaimed in a voice that seemed strangely familiar, "but I find myself in a very awkward position, and am obliged to throw myself on the generosity of a stranger for assistance."

Here the masked Hamlet paused. I bowed slightly, and inquired what service I could render him.

"I came here with a lady," he explained, "and I have just discovered that I must have left a most valuable diamond ring on my dressing table at the Hotel d'Angleterre. It is a ring I value greatly, being, indeed, an heirloom of the family. I do not wish to trouble the lady with my loss, and could easily absent myself half an hour, if you would stay by her until my return. She is dressed as Ophelia."

"But surely," I objected, "the lady you refer to as Ophelia will detect the difference, and——"

"No, no," he interrupted eagerly, "you have nothing to fear. The lady and I have decided never to refer again to the subject of our recent conversation, and you can readily converse with her on any commonplace topic. You will find her rather absent-minded, but that will only make your task the easier."

I felt a singular reluctance to comply with the stranger's request, but curiosity, and a certain sense of humour at the novelty of the situation prevailed, and I expressed my willingness to take his place. The unknown was profuse in his thanks.

"You will find her in the little recess to the right of the balcony," he added, hastening away before I had time to repent of my good nature.

"There is no help for it now," I reflected, as I mounted the staircase to the balcony. I had no difficulty in finding the object of my search, and seated myself in the vacant seat at her side. She took no notice of my presence at first, and I was only too glad to be spared the necessity of conversing. Her thoughts were evidently not of a pleasing nature, for her eyes bore traces of recent weeping.

"Have you not forgiven me yet?" she said appealingly. "I have suffered terribly, God knows how much. Indeed, I have no right to be here at all, and if my husband knew——" Here she broke down, weeping bitterly.

I was dismayed. This was more than I had reckoned for, but before I could frame a reply she broke in hurriedly:

"And if you have given him too much ether, if he should remain unconscious, if——" her voice failed her, and she hastily put up her handkerchief to her eyes.

My curiosity was now completely aroused, and under the pretext of obtaining a little fresh air, I suggested she should remove her mask for a few minutes.

"Do you think it is safe to do so?" she queried.

"Yes, perfectly," I replied, "there is no one near, and a little fresh air will do you more good than anything else."

She removed her mask without any further hesitation, and to my unbounded astonishment, I recognised her as the beautiful Mademoiselle Adelaide Etienne, whose picture had appeared in the leading society papers a month ago, on the occasion of her marriage with the rich advocate, Monsieur Dubrey.

It was no secret that the marriage had been purely a mercenary transaction on the part of the parents, who regarded the rich suitor's money as an adequate equivalent for the great disparity of years. I was too overwhelmed with dismay at this discovery to find words for the moment, and greatly to my relief, I saw that the real Hamlet of this modern tragedy had re-entered the dancing-hall.

"Pray excuse me for a moment, I see a friend below," I stammered out, and without further ceremony I hurried down the broad staircase. My double met me at the foot of the stairs, and after ascertaining that he had secured the missing jewel, I quitted the festive hall. My mind was in a strange state of tumult; indignation gave place to pity in my heart, as I thought of the beautiful face that had looked up at mine with such wistful entreaty. For the first time I felt that the remembrance of a woman's face would haunt me, do what I might, go where I would—and that woman the wife of another man.

Wild dreams troubled my sleep that night, and it was with a vivid sense of relief that I saw the dawn herald in a new day. While glancing at the morning paper my attention was arrested by a paragraph headed "A Suspicious Death," and running my eye rapidly down the column, I read the account of Monsieur Dubrey's death the night before, from an overdose of ether.

Suspicion, it was said, pointed to the wife, who had been arrested on her return to the house. I snatched up my hat, and on the impulse of the moment hurried off to the Bureau of Police, intent only on clearing the young wife from so terrible an accusation. My statement was gravely received by the detective in charge of the case, and after taking down my deposition, I was informed that my attendance would be necessary at the forthcoming trial.

The remainder of this dreadful tragedy is soon told. I was present at the trial, and to my horror and despair I recognised in the accused accomplice and lover of Madame Dubrey the friend of my youth, the friend whose advent I had been daily and hourly expecting. I turned sick and faint at meeting him again under such terrible circumstances. He pleaded guilty of manslaughter, no doubt with the idea of exonerating Madame Dubrey from any share in the fatal deed.

The jury brought in a verdict of wilful murder against Maurice, but recommended him to mercy. Adelaide Dubrey was acquitted, but I can never forget the awful look of despair on her face as she heard her lover condemned to penal servitude for life. She staggered out of the court in a half-dazed condition, like one bereft of reason. I would feign have spoken to her and offered some word of sympathy, but the frozen look of horror on her face held me silent. No comfort could avail aught to mitigate a grief like hers. The next day, when they came to wake her, she was found dead, and by her side an empty bottle of chloroform.

So began and ended the brief and only tragedy of my life.

F. White.

LADIES! LADIES!! LADIES!!!

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The Passing of Jack Thompson.

There were four of them—all barristers—seated by the window of a cosy room overlooking King's Bench Walk, in the Temple.

The youngest was the first to break the silence which had existed for several minutes.

"Whoever heard of a man going to a hospital for his heart before," he said, looking over the trees—light green in the pale sunshine of an early summer evening. "We miss poor old Creasy," and he began drumming a little operatic air on the window-sill.

"I don't know how we shall exist without his stories," observed a Q.C., with a quiet smile. "They say it will be a month or more before he is fit to move."

Someone sitting on the sofa produced a little bunch of manuscript written in a neat feminine hand. "If he cannot tell stories he can write them," he said; "this is for the *Illustrated Quarterly*."

"Read it," said the Q.C.; "anything to enliven us a little."

The man who had spoken hesitated a moment. Then he began:

"It is called 'The Passing of Jack Thompson,'" he said.

"CHAPTER I.

"It was February. The desolate and dreary prairie was covered with a light blanket of snow, save here and there bare spots where the cheerless wind had swept. The deflecting rays of the cold, low-hanging sun caused the burnished glass in the western windows of a little house standing off the old Santa Fé road to blaze as if on fire, and to seem to melt the freezing air.

"Half-a-dozen hounds bayed forth vociferous welcome to a horseman, their returning master, now ascending the steep road. A frail, dejected woman peeped through the half-drawn paper curtains of the low window, and, seeming to gather assurance, opened the door and stood upon its threshold.

"'Well?' she said interrogatively.

"'Tain't no use, Sal. Th' horse was found with my halter on her, an' that's enough to convict th' Apostle Paul.'

"'Why don't you go to ol' Judge Gilman. Tell him how little Bobbie was taken sick, an' how you just borrowed the mare to go for the doctor?'

"'Sal, will you dry up? I tells you 't ain't no use. He'd jest say 't was fer me to make it wash with the jury if I could.'

"'Why couldn't you, Jack?'

"'Why? Because I couldn't, I tells you. Do you hear that? If I'd a went to th' ol' Doc's house first an' had been ketched there, it might work, fer then he could swear fer me.'

"'Well, I'd be honest an' jest tell why Doc Tuff ain't on your side.'

"'I say 't ain't no use. This borrowin' of horses is gettin' to be too all-fired common. My lawyer, ol' Parsons, says it's a mighty thin go, though he do say, if I'll swear to it hard, an' you'll stand up to the same racket, he'll do the best he can; but he didn't make no bones of tellin' me his own mind as to th' outcome.'

"'Of course I'll swear for you, an' you know I'll do it cheerful, too. But what else did he say?'

"'He said 't would be deader medicine if we could prove a aliby while he had our hands in. 'Tis easy to see he don't take no stock in the sick child racket.'

"'God knows 'tis the Gospel truth, an' I hain't afeerd but what there'll be some of the jury that'll know the truth when they sees it. I recollec' a hearin' ol' Jedge Carson, when he was a ridin' the circuit, and used to stay with pa, say you could count safe on a findin' at least ten honest men in his box.'

"'Mebbe that rule would go them days in Missouri. But Jedge Carson was never up fer horse stealin' in Kansas, was he? I guess not. A feller has jest about got to prove hisself everlastingly innecent, or he's a goner.'

"'How does you make that out?'

"'Ol' Parsons says that th' Supreme Court, in Cassidy's case, made a law that th' havin' of a thing right away after it's stole is enough. That makes out a *primer face*—or some kind of a Latin landguidge case—which means, in plain United States, that you are in fer it, unless you can get out.'

"'Mebbe, Jack, if you 'll tell 'em of your conversion, an' a joinin' of th' church two years ago down to th' Stranger Creek camp meetin', 't would help. Elder Berry would recomember how you stumbled 'long up to the mourners' bench, an' give up so complete!'

"'Yes, an' he knows how darned quick I back-slid. That'd make a fine case, now, wouldn't it? What fer show would a feller have with nine out of ten Methodists, mebby, on the jury. I'd be no bigger'n a ten spot.'

"'But, Jack, mebbe God would move 'em to overlook your faults, for who is there that hasn't his own? Besides, mebbe there'll be some on the jury as isn't perfessors, an' will be prejudiced fer you. An' mebbe Judge Gilman would tell 'em that you was up fer horse stealin', and not fer back-slidin'!'

"'Mebbe he would, Sal. But what does you know 'bout juries?'

"And with that he fastened his horse and went inside the cabin disconsolately.

"CHAPTER II.

"The State *versus* Thompson had come up. The court-house was filled to overflowing with curious spectators and idle hangers-on. A number of witnesses were loitering about the courtyard waiting to testify. Here and there knots of sun-browned farmers discussed Thompson's case. A few expressed no opinion. Many said he was undoubtedly guilty. All agreed that there must be an organised band of horse thieves operating in the country, and suspicion fell on Jack Thompson as being a member thereof, partly because his farming seemed to be a mere pretence, but more especially because of his sudden disappearance and his frequent returns after several days of absence, often with a new horse, concerning which, when questioned, he always declared either he had won it at a race or 'swapped' for it.

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"Everybody who spoke of Thompson's wife at all spoke well of her, and expressions of sympathy for her were frequent. 'She ought to leave him, for he treats her shameful,' was the general verdict as to her; while, as to him, it found expression in muttered, 'we've no use for the lazy, drunken thief, and gambler,' often accompanied by curses in menacing tones.

"There was no mistaking the temper of the community, and no one was more sensitive to it and its demands for a victim, upon whom its indignant wrath might be visited, than old Parsons, the defendant's counsel. Technical defences would only result in mob violence.

"After some delay, incident to numerous challenges, a jury of 'twelve good and lawful men' was duly empanelled and sworn, and was at once confronted by Mr. Idleman, the county attorney, who proceeded to state the case the State expected to make, and was followed by Parsons, who, in a low voice, very briefly stated the defence.

"Then the prosecution introduced its evidence. The ownership of the mare was proven to be in Deacon Ezekial Snoddy. Then the circumstances of her disappearance in the night from the barn of her owner—of her being found next morning tied to a post in front of a saloon in a town about fourteen miles from the point of asportation—of the defendant being seen hurriedly riding her into town at day-break, and of his being intoxicated when arrested, were all narrated by the witnesses. All of which, of course, it was shown occurred in the County of ———, and State of Kansas.

"It was remarked by a number of bystanders, who had heard of the adroitness of defendant's counsel, and of his skill as a cross-examiner, that he must have considered the case of the State impregnable; for there was scarcely a question put by way of cross-examination.

"The defendant then went into the witness-box. Under the skilful handling of his attorney he told in a simple way his story. Briefly it was this: His little child was taken sick on the night in question; he left home about two o'clock, taking a halter with him; upon going to his corral he found the bars had been thrown down (probably by some mischievous person or enemy), and his horses had gone to the woods; he then decided to go to his nearest neighbour, Deacon Snoddy, and borrow one; arrived there, he concluded, on account of the lateness of the hour, that he wouldn't awaken the sleeping household, but would go to the barn, take a horse, and explain matters fully to the Deacon on returning with Dr. Tuff in the morning; that when he arrived in town it was a little after daylight; the night having been cold, and he being faint and chilled by his long ride, he determined on taking a good stiff drink to brace him up before going over to the doctor's residence; that, after taking the drink in the 'Red Front Saloon' (for it was before the days of prohibition), he sat down by the stove in the bar-room to get warm, and must have fallen asleep, for the next thing he remembered was his arrest; that he then sent word by the constable to the doctor to go out to see his child.

"On cross-examination Thompson admitted that he understood the child was found up and playing when the doctor arrived; that he had not, previous to his arrest, said anything to the bar tender or to anyone else about his child's sickness; admitted that he once had a quarrel about a divisional fence some time before with the owner of the mare; he further frankly admitted that the halter found on the mare belonged to him.

"When Thompson was excused a smile spread over the faces of the bystanders. Evidently he had not made a favourable impression. He had not looked at the jury, but kept his restless eyes on the sheriff, as if imploring his kindly protection. Such expressions as, 'Too thin,' 'He's dead sure to walk,' and 'How long do you think he'll get?' were exchanged in audible whispers.

"Then the pale little woman in black, whose eyes had been riveted on the face of her husband during the narration of his story, entered the box. In a low voice she told of being awakened in the night by little Bobbie's croup; of her husband starting for his horse to go after the doctor; of her using the simple remedies at hand; and of Bobbie's being up and playing when the doctor came. On cross-examination, she admitted her husband had quarrelled with Deacon Snoddy, but stated that she thought it had been made up at the time her husband was converted.

"Here a titter went round the audience that occasioned the old bailiff to rap on the table three times with his knife, and to look threateningly at the standing men.

"The witness became excited; the colour came to her thin face; she stood erect, and her eyes brightened. Elevating her voice, her nostrils quivering with passion, she continued:

"'Those silly men may laugh; but, man'—addressing the jury—'Jack was converted the time our baby girl died, and he would 'a' stayed, had not the drink habit got such a grip on him, as it has, too, on lots of men I know who laughed out loud just now. Oh, I know you, Tom Green, and——'

"The Court interfered here, and cautioned the witness to confine her answers to the questions asked.

"The witness proceeded:

"'Before Jack got religion, Mr. Snoddy came over during the revival, an' brought along his hymn book an' Testament with him, an' sung, an' read, an' prayed, to beat all out of doors. He said he was wrong about that fence, an' asked the good Lord to forgive him for the scrap, too—which I doubt if He did—an' said that neighbours should dwell together in peace, an' all that kind of stuff.'

"The Court again admonished the witness to state only what was said and done, and to keep her opinions to herself.

"'Yes, sir; as I was sayin', the old hypocrite—there he sets now—said he was sorry, too, and he won't dispute a sayin' it neither, an' then he asked Jack an' me down to th' camp meetin', an' took on as if the Kingdom had come. Then he went, an' th' next Sunday Jack riz up for prayers, an' before I knowed what was on, ol' Deacon Snoddy was a hustlin' Jack for'ard to the mourners' bench, both on 'em a-shoutin' "glory" an' "amen" at every jump; an' afore the meetin' broke Jack was singin', "While the Lamp Holds Out to Burn," an' everybody was so happy that I couldn't keep th' tears back!'

"Here the witness, overcome by the memories which her narrative recalled, began to weep, and there was an opportunity for Idleman to collect his thoughts, and to renew the unfortunate cross-examination. The prosecuting witness leant over and whispered in his ear, to which the County Attorney made a responsive nod.

"'Mrs. Thompson,' he said sternly, 'do you mean for these gentlemen here—the jury—to understand that at the time of this larceny—that at, or just before, this horse was took—there was no bad blood betwixt the families of the prosecuting witness and your said husband?'

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"'No, sir; no, siree,' the witness answered emphatically.

"The County Attorney looked round the room with an air of victory, and proceeded deliberately to the attack, as he returned the little roll of tobacco wrapped in tissue paper to his pocket.

"'Then you admit that there was bad blood?'

"'I do.'

"'Will you be kind enough, Mrs. Thompson, to state wherein and whereof that bad blood consisted?'

"'Yes, sir, if you wants me to, an' it has any bearin' on th' case.'

"The prosecuting witness pulled nervously at the shiny coat sleeve of the County Attorney, but as he had repeatedly done so before only to suggest irrelevant questions, Idleman paid no attention to him.

"'Madam, since we have started in, we might as well go on; but I want the jury not to lose sight of the fact that we air a-tryin' your said husband for larceny of a bay mare, and not the prosecutin' witness for bein' a Christian. You may proceed—state fully.'

"Idleman emphasised the last two words.

"'Well, one night, as we was about to get into our waggon to come home from th' revival, Mr. Snoddy says to my husband, says he: "Brother Thompson, supposin' Mrs. Snoddy gets up in front on th' big spring seat with you—she's a-gettin' old and crippled up like with rheumatz—an' I'll ride behind with Sister Thompson"—a-meanin' me. We hadn't more'n got started till Mr. Snoddy said, says he: "Your seat, Sister Thompson, would be a mighty sight comfortabler if you had a back to it." An' then I felt his arm a-pressin' close agin' my back. I edged away, an' he edged closer; every time th' wheel struck a rut he slid up, an' didn't slide back neither when th' rut come his side. Then——'

"'I object, as incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial,' shouted the County Attorney, aroused by the titter that went round the room. 'This has nothin' to do with the bad blood asked for, and is not responsive to my question.'

"The judge removed his corncob pipe from his mouth, and wearily stretching his long legs on the corner of the bench, announced:

"'Mr. Idleman, you asked the witness to "state fully." I don't think after doin' that you ought to be allowed to object to her manner of doing it. What the witness is about to state may, or may not, be material; no one can tell till she's stated. So I'll overrule the State's objection, Mr. County Attorney, and give you an exception, and you can move to strike out after the witness shall have done.'

"'Very well,' said Idleman, obsequiously bowing to his Honour, and motioning to Mrs. Thompson to proceed.

"'Then he put his right arm tighter than I thought was becomin', an' him a deacon, an' I was so provoked I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to make no scene with his poor invalid wife, an' her a good Christian woman as I thought then. So I jest pinched his hand as hard as I could, but he only hugged me harder. It took all the Christian grace I had to keep from yellin', an' he was afeared, too, for when I was goin' to say somethin' he'd clap his hand over my mouth. An' we kept on that a-way till we got to their bars, an' they got out, an' th' ol' hypocrite thanked my husband perfusely. I was afeared to say anythin' to Jack with his quick temper, so I jest made up my mind I'd put on my bonnet next mornin' an' go over to Mrs. Snoddy's, which I did, an' tell her jest how worldly her pretendin' husband was. After I'd set awhile an' we had went over th' list to be baptised th' next Sunday at the ford, an' she had asked me to stay to dinner, I up an' tol' her jest why I couldn't, as a Christian woman, accept her kind invite. She got boilin' mad, an' 'lowed if I hadn't pinched Ezekiel's arm he never would 'a' hugged me, an' that it was all my fault. The pretendin' ol' thing said Ezekiel had never hugged her a-comin' home since they were married, if she'd pinched him for a signal. She jest kept right on a-tryin' to put the blame on to me, till I left in a dudgin', an' we hain't spoke since. Then as I was a-comin' home, who should I see a-cuttin' across th' cornfield but that there same ol' hypocrite, an' him a deacon, too. When he gets up close enough, he says, says he, all a-beamin' too: "Sister Thompson——"

"'I says, says I: "Don't sister me, you old pretender."

"'He says: "What's up now?"

"'I says, says I: "I've been down an' told your wife on you; that's what's up."

"'"Told her what?" says he, a-pretendin' ignorance.

"'"You know well enough," says I.

"'Then he says, says he—him a-gettin' closer up, an' reachin' for my hand—"Sister—or Mrs. Thompson——"

"'"Stand back," says I, indignant.'

"Here the prosecuting witness moved restlessly and whispered in the receptive ear of counsel for the prosecution, and that functionary, perceiving a dangerous crisis was imminent, proceeded to object, and to 'strike out,' getting into an animated discussion with the Court over the relevancy of the testimony. Counsel for the defence shrewdly realising that with the Court on his side the matter would be presented with sufficient convincing potency, said nothing. The Court, after overruling the objections and motions, and allowing exceptions to the State, again admonished the witness to state only facts.

"A number of the open-mouthed by-standers whispered together—the consensus of opinions being that Judge Gilman was too learned in the law to permit the forceful Idleman successfully to pull the wool over his eyes. Parsons simply winked at his client.

"The witness resumed:

"'Well, as I was a sayin', that 'ol' pretendin' hypocrite there——'

"'The witness will not express opinions, but state facts. Don't call any names, Mrs. Thompson,' cautioned the Court.

"'No, sir, I won't; but I could, though. Well, after that ol' pretender—an' him a deacon, too—got up a-close enough to shake hands, he went on to say as how I knowed th' seat had no back to it, an' that he jest didn't mean nothin' but to keep me from a-fallin' out back'ards. An' then—th' cheek of him!—he 'lowed if I hadn't pinched him—as if I did it before he did nothin'. You see, he was jest everlastingly bound to put it on to me, jest as that old huzzy, his wife, done. Then he says, says he: "Sister—or Mrs. Thompson, 't ain't no use in neighbours havin' words or hard feelin's agin one another; suppose we try to compromise it?" says he.

"'"How can we," says I, "as honest Christians, compromise with Satan?"

"'"Well, of course," says he, "we can't do that if huggin' is a sin; but," says he, a raising' his hand to threaten, "I'll tell you what's what if you ever tells your husband, or anyone else about that ride, I'll be dod-durned if I don't tell the State's Attorney your husband

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belongs to the Jones gang of horse-thieves." Them air his exact words. Well, then I got so mad at the ol' cowardly pretender that I jest rode off an' left him a-callin' fer me to come back an' make up. Do you think I went back? Not much.'

"'Why didn't you tell your husband about his threat?' propounded the persistent prosecutor, with an expansive feeling of self-admiration visible in his countenance.

"'Why didn't I? Well, because I knowed what ol' Snoddy said was a libel. He knowed all the time he was a-talkin' that Jack was no bigger a horse-stealer than his own self, an' him a deacon. An' I knowed if I told Jack that there would be a world of trouble; so I just considered it my Christian duty to keep low, an' so I jest kept mum, an' said nothin' till now—an' I reckon I wouldn' now if you, Mr. Idleman, hadn't started in on it.'

"The round of half-suppressed laughter that greeted this last statement stung the usually obtuse Idleman to the quick. Seeking to recover his composure, he nervously fumbled the court files, and made a side remark to the prosecuting witness, for the benefit of the jury, to the effect that he guessed an intelligent jury would know how much of her testimony to believe, seeing that she was an interested witness.

"At last the witness was dismissed. Old Parsons eyes twinkled, and he stroked his moustache and goatee, and ran his hand through his thin grey hair with an air of extreme satisfaction at the result of his adversary's cross-examination. Thompson's case, too, had evidently been strengthened in the minds of the bystanders.

"Then numerous motions were made, and special instructions were asked, all presumably aimed at getting before the jury the real points at issue. The court then, with greater verbosity than perspicuity, instructed the jury as to the law, laying particular stress on the intention of the defendant, and also on the presumption which arises when recently stolen property is found in the possession of another.

"The respective counsel then harangued the jury in the customary voluble and vociferous manner. Idleman and Parsons were both in their shirtsleeves, the latter *sans* vest and *sans* collar.

"At length the jury retired to consider solemnly of its verdict. Soon a loud and prolonged rapping on the door of the jury room imported a probable agreement. Then the twelve good men and true slowly filed in, the old bailiff bringing up the rear. No one could guess the result from their sphinx-like countenances. The clerk received the verdict from the foreman, and proceeded to read it in a deliberate tone. When he reached the closing words he hesitated as if astonished, glanced at the County Attorney, and said: '*Not Guilty.*'

"CHAPTER III.

"It was dusk.

"A mule team stood lazily before the 'Red Front' saloon. A waggon cover was loosely thrown over some sacks of meal in the waggon behind the seat. Before long Thompson came out, a long-necked bottle projecting from one of the pockets of his sack coat, climbed to a seat beside the waiting woman, placed a six-shooter between them, and sullenly commanded her to drive on.

"On their way home, Thompson told his wife that some one said that it was her testimony, and her manner of giving it, that won the case.

"'Didn't I tell you what Jedge Carson said about a jury havin' ten honest men on it? I jest prayed hard to convert th' other two,' she observed.

"'But how did you come to give 'em that round up on th' Deacon, Sal?'

"'Well, I jest got kinder desp'rate when I see what a poor cut you made of it. Our lawyer said to just keep cool; that he'd let me off easy on th' direct, 'cause he knowed th' County Attorney would give me a chance to get in my work on th' cross. An' it seems I did.'

"'Sal, did th' ol' Deacon hug you as you let on like that?'

"'Of course he did. Wasn't I on oath? Does you reck'n I'd swear to a lie to save you, or anyone else, Jack Thompson? No, siree! You know I wouldn't.'

"'I'm mighty glad he did hug you, fur it saved me, dead sure, from goin' up to Lansing. But I'm blamed if I sees how you come to give it up in the box in th' powerful way you did, Sal.'

"'It jest popped into my head when I see Idleman was tryin' to make out you stole th' mare, to get even with th' ol' Deacon, or else to make it seem onlikely that you'd do your borryin' of him. It did go hard to tell it right out before all them men; but I done it 'cause you was my husband, an' 'cause I didn't want the neighbour children to throw 't up to Bobbie that his pa was in th' gaol for horse-stealin'. I could stand that.'

"'Well, ol' girl, you've broke the record as a winner. If I hadn't got gull, an' that fool Hank Blackman had 'a' showed up as he agreed fair he would do, th' Deacon's mare would 'a' passed along, layin' by daytimes in th' brush, an' travellin' nights, till she'd 'a' been over th' line in Clay County long ago. 'Tain't fair, Sal, I oughter tell you now, a-seein' as how you played white by me, an' saved me by yer tall swearin'. I reckon I'm th' fust horse thief as ever got off in Eastern Kansas.'

"'Thompson, does you mean to own up to me that you did steal the Deacon's mare?'

"'That's what, Sal. You see I agreed to do it that night, an' Bobbie's a-gettin' sick gave me an excuse to you fur to slide. An' that's the everlastin' truth, too.'

"'An' you belong to th' Jones gang?'

"'Yes; that's about the size of it.'

"'An' you'd have me swear to a lie to keep you from th' law?'

"'In course I would, an' you'd do it too—if not for me, you'd do it for little Bob!'

"Thompson here took the bottle from his pocket and placed it to his lips, as he already had done several times. His wife watched him askance. She knew that any protest from her would be received with curses, but she had grown as insensible to them as any woman compelled to drag through life tied to an ill-tempered drunkard ever grows.

"'Thompson, seems as though we'd had 'nough trouble for one day. I wish you wouldn't drink no more till mornin'. Please try jest this once? I don't want Bobbie to see me a-cryin' when we get home.'

"'Darn you; look on your book, will you? I don't want no woman who has been a-carryin' on with another man an' keepin' quiet till it is forced out o' her to be tellin' me what to do. Do you hear me?' Thompson sullenly responded with a most tantalising expression.

"There was a period of silence, during which the little woman, already overwrought by the nervous strain of the trial, and now so rudely shocked by the cruel audacity of her husband, tried to swallow the lump which seemed to come persistently into her throat.

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"'Thompson, air you goin' to lick old Snoddy?' she ventured.

"'No, you bet I ain't. He can hug you again, if he likes to, fur all of me.'

"'Thompson—answer me true now—supposin' th' Deacon had 'a' went on an' done th' very worst a man could do—an' then, supposin' I'd told it in th' box, an' it had saved you from the pen, wouldn't you 'a' done nothin' to him fur it?'

"'I don't know as I'd a' made much fuss 'bout it.'

"'*Take that, you cowardly whelp!*' shouted a masculine voice from the rear end of the waggon.

"As Thompson fell backwards, his wife, turning, saw through the puff of smoke a man half concealed by some meal sacks, holding in his right hand a revolver, which he had quietly slipped from the seat as he had listened to Thompson's confession and audacious cruelty.

"'Hank Blackman!' gasped the confused woman.

"'Yes, the same ol' Hank what loved you back in Clay; he's been a-hangin' 'round these parts more'n you know, Sally, a-thinkin' mebbe you'd have use fur him some time.'

"'Don't tell me that you love me; you're a horse-thief an' a——. Oh, Hank, why *did* you do it?'

"''Cause I could stand it no longer to hear Thompson abuse you and refuse to fight for you, Sally. I won't let no woman be used in sich way, all the more you; 'sides, what he said 'bout my b'longin' to the Jones' gang 's a lie. I only trained with 'em to be near you, an' that's the God's truth.'

"'Oh, Hank, you oughter 'a' waited.'

"'Wait! Haven't I been a-waitin' patient all these years, an' seen you a droopin' an' a fadin' under bad treatment? It's done now. I may swing, but I'll know that you won't have to suffer no more from *him*.'

"The pale woman sat motionless and silent. At last, with an effort, she sobbed, 'Hank——' but speech failed her.

"Blackman caught her in his arms as she was falling from the waggon. When she had revived, he said:

"'Sally, 't ain't like you to give up so; be brave; remember that Hank 's your friend, your lover, and will wait for you. I must leave yer now. If the Vigilance Committee comes to your house to-night, jest tell 'em Thompson is already done for—was killed by some one a-shootin' from behind on your way home.'

"Blackman drew the frail form of the woman to him, kissed her, and disappeared in the darkness into the tall grass.

"The poor woman quietly placed her shawl over her dead husband's face, picked up the reins, and with eyes staringly fixed upon the mules, drove on.

* * * * *

"The neighbours gave it out that although Jack Thompson was undoubtedly 'stick,' he could not and did not elude the vigilance of the 'Committee,' whose unerring judgment could always be safely trusted to supplement a doubtful verdict; and so the credit of his passing was with many a sly and knowing wink appropriated by others."

* * * * *

"That's a good story," said the Q.C., as the reading finished, "but where did Creasy learn his American dialect from?"

No one seemed to know.

"There's an American nurse at the hospital," suggested the man who had read the story, "possibly she collaborated with him."

"Possibly," asserted the Q.C. "In that case the poor fellow's condition is hopeless." W. G. C.

ON * THE * BRINK.

One evening—I think it was the first night of the revival of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Lyceum—Jack Saloeny and his wife occupied a box there, which, after much difficulty, as he averred, Colonel Dunkirque, of the "Heavies," had been fortunate enough to secure. As a general rule, Colonel Dunkirque was not in the habit of presenting first-night boxes to his friends unless he had some object to gain. People suggested that it was a ruse on his part to win Jack's good graces—especially the smiles of Jack's wife; but, then, people might have lied—they frequently do in such matters—and yet for once they were right.

Dunkirque was as handsome a man as you would see anywhere—a man whose appearance was hailed with inward tribulation and groaning by poor beggars who had not the pluck to kick him out of their houses when his attentions grew too pronounced. It was rumoured, too, that his doings lately had been very shady—so shady that his friends (he had many friends) all predicted that he would speedily have to bolt from the impending clutches of those ministering fiends, Messrs. Shylock and Co.

Sibyl Saloeny was a very handsome woman—dangerously handsome. She had masses of golden hair, which did not owe its sunny tints to some vile wash; arched red lips, sweet blue eyes, a soft, white neck, and a complexion of dazzling fairness. In addition to these charms, she possessed a knack of pleasing people when she chose to take the trouble, and was also very popular in her own immediate circle. Jack had fallen in love with her in his usual impulsive, headlong manner; but, for my part, I always thought her a trifle hard and unsympathetic.

There was sometimes a look in her sweet eyes not entirely acquiescent when Jack had intimated something of which she disapproved. Having said what he wanted, Jack generally let her have her own way, and so the impending storm always blew over—for a time. She demanded absolute slavery from him, and accepted his devotion as a matter of course. Club friends, amusements, all had to give way to this little autocrat's imperious mandates; and poor Jack was spoilt for us.

Yet he was very happy. In her softer moments, prejudiced as I was, I could but admit the charm of her

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sweet, low voice, and the winning eyes which could have lured a babe from its mother's arms. But I often imagined that her thoughtlessness would one day bring her to grief. She had such a superb contempt for conventionalities. You and I, gentle reader, know better. We bow down to and worship Mrs. Grundy as if we liked her; but do we? I think not.

That evening things seemed to be approaching a climax—a particularly unpleasant one, too, for poor Jack. He did not notice what was going on. He loved his wife too dearly even to dream of suspecting her. It was a delightful experience to him to listen to the balcony scene, and to follow the hapless fortunes of the star-crossed lovers, although he could not help wishing that the Romeo would be a little less intellectual, and a trifle more impressive with the lovely Juliet. Practically, his wife and Dunkirque were alone—Jack told me all this long afterwards without attaching any importance to it, and I linked the fragments together.

Half an hour later I stepped in. Jack whispered to me not to speak, and I was greeted by Mrs. Saloeny with the usual polite indifference a wife reserves for her husband's friends. In short, it was not ten minutes before I had seen enough of the situation, and concluded to step outside for a lounge in the corridor. The glamour of the scene had failed to touch my jaded senses. I could not help seeing a grimy stage carpenter up in the flies, and this naturally did away with all illusion. What an awful bore if the man had dropped his old wideawake upon the passionate lovers.

The door opened (I was leaning against the next box); out came Mrs. Saloeny and Dunkirque; she shivering—in the hot atmosphere—and a trifle pale. Her eyes wore a frightened look; and—yes, she certainly did seem inclined to cry.

"We shall be just in time for the last train," she nervously whispered. "I told Jack that you should see me to my carriage, and he—he is going to his club."

"So much the better," said Dunkirque hurriedly. "We shall not be missed until we cross the Channel."

I hate scenes; but it was necessary to do something. A little fellow whom I had dandled on my knee, and loved like a son, must not be duped in this shameful way.

Dunkirque hurried past me, but I reached the staircase before Mrs. Saloeny reappeared, hooded and cloaked. Heaven knows I never acted so promptly before in my life; and yet I have been in one or two tight places.

When Colonel Dunkirque's carriage was called the coachman drove up with his fur tippet nearly over his ears. The night was cold, and Mrs. Saloeny trembled, half-turned for a moment, then stepped in. She had crossed the Rubicon—and was lost!

I wonder if she thought at that moment of the little hands that were folded before her night and morn, as the little sleepy eyes were raised to hers, and Jack's children lisped out their usual prayer: "God bless papa and mamma, and make us all dood. Amen!" I do not believe that she could have thought of them, or else she never would have been there.

"Viaduct Station!" called out the Colonel, flinging the fellow one of his few remaining half-crowns—it was the last desperate flight of the butterfly in the sunshine. Afterwards he would have time to repent or die in a gutter unshriven. In the madness of the moment he did not care which.

The horses dashed forward into the darkness, pulling well up to their collars, but—they did not go to the Viaduct Station!

Half an hour later, when they drew up, the Colonel jumped out to assist Mrs. Saloeny to alight. She was trembling still, and half inclined to return. Already the dark shadows of the weary years to come were lengthened out before her. And the man whose love she was about to betray! Well, it was now too late to recede. She was sorry—most women are—when they are found out.

"Sold!" hissed the Colonel, in his rage kicking a poor crossing-sweeper who had rushed up to open the carriage door.

"I wos only a-openin' the door," whined the old mendicant.

"Confound you!" foamed the Colonel, "you're always opening doors when you're not wanted. What the dickens is the meaning of this? But it is not too late."

"Not so fast, Dunkirque," I said, swinging down from the box, the fur tippet still upon my shoulders. "Wait a minute, Mrs. Saloeny"—for the benefit of the servants—"I have won my wager. The Colonel betted I would never drive him anywhere without his knowing it. Let me take you into the house."

Mrs. Saloeny took my arm, and I led her up the steps. She did not speak, but smiled strangely, and touched my hand.

Then I turned to Dunkirque.

"You are an infernal scoundrel!" I said, taking him on one side. "If you choose to make a scene I'll knock you down, old as I am. No; I shall not give you satisfaction. Before you are off let me warn you to beware of Scotland Yard. That bill of Lavington's has been placed in their hands, and the forgery traced to you."

This time he really went to the Viaduct Station, caught the last train, and was seen no more.

Then I returned to the house.

"You have acted like—a—hero," sobbed Mrs. Saloeny. "I can never repay you."

There stood Jack smiling in the doorway. She did not see him. He must never know.

"It was only a trifling service, and one which I was only too happy to render," I said, bowing low. "You over-rate it. A drunken servant is always dangerous."

"You have—saved—my—honour," she was beginning.

"Hush!" I whispered. "Jack must never know." Then aloud: "You are hysterical. Let me ring for your maid."

Between us we got her out of the room.

"What is it all about, old fellow?" asked the irreverent Jack, when Mrs. Saloeny had been safely disposed of in her room.

"Jarvis—drunk—again—as usual," I murmured laconically. (The lie cost me five hundred pounds and a free passage to the colonies for the irreproachable Jarvis and his family; but it was not a dear price to pay for the happiness of one's dearest friend.) "I've discharged the brute for you."

"All right," said easy-going Jack. "I'll get another."

And poor Jarvis was discharged.

I do not think that Mrs. Saloeny slept much that night. Jack told me that she cried a good deal.

"She seems to think that she has had a narrow escape, old fellow," Jack said unsuspiciously.

"Yes," I answered, "very."

But he never knew how narrow.

Richard Sibert.

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The Five Blue Spots.

Day after day, and night after night, did I brood over the great discovery which I thought was about to be opened up to me. I had long had a belief in the progressive development of creation; I believed that it was still possible to find the spec—the germ from which I could raise up a perfectly organised living being. I felt a new and strange pleasure in believing that the mystery of creation was now solved—that from the first inorganic atom which had received the force of life all other created beings had slowly, gradually, regularly advanced up to the period in which I lived.

The power of creation—the secret of life—was my god. My belief was that the force of life might be given to this inorganic atom. My laboratory was perfectly furnished; my days were spent there, and often entire nights. My mind was absorbed in the great truth I was bringing to light.

The confined air of my laboratory at length affected my health; a change was absolutely necessary. I struggled against the idea of removing for some time, and often left my little wife with tears standing in her deep blue eyes, after she had unsuccessfully implored me to leave London for a short time. Dear Annie! and yet I loved her! Heavens, to think that I—but I must proceed with my story as it occurred.

We went to the North of Northumberland to stay with an old college friend, who had frequently asked us to come on previous occasions. We were received warmly, and as it was winter time, we had plenty of occupation.

A few brisk runs with the county foxhounds almost made me forget my laboratory. The weather at length changed; first to a severe frost with snow, and then to a complete thaw. The dismal north-east wind shrieked through the leafless trees, and drove torrents of sleet splashing against the old-fashioned windows.

Tiring of hoping, and weary of grumbling, I was driven to take refuge in my friend's library. After a long search for something interesting, I came upon a little brown volume bound with two dingy, metal clasps. On opening its dark and discoloured pages, I found it was written in French manuscript. A hurried glance showed me that the work was on alchemy, a translation from the Arabic. All my former hopes returned in an instant. I pored over the pages of my newly-obtained treasure till late in the evening, heedless of the impatience of my friends, who, after doing everything to entice me away, left me to my book and self.

* * * * *

The secret, then, was now mine; here, in this old, neglected book, I had found a groundwork for my exertions. All the truths I had collected, all the experiments I had made, bore me out. I saw what had prevented others in ancient times from carrying out their designs. They knew not the life-giving power; the wonders of electricity had not then been discovered.

Vaguely hinted at and darkly guessed at in their works, I saw them groping their way in mist and uncertainty; but I—I was surrounded by the light of science. Wonderful, mysterious truths broke in upon my mind. My whole method and plan of operations stood out clearly before me. A restless force urged me to commence my scheme instantly. I must leave for London that very night.

I found my wife and friends retiring to rest. I told them my intention of starting for town immediately. Remonstrance and entreaty were of no avail, and in less than an hour I was seated in the train on the way to London. The train seemed to drag slowly through the darkness, but about noon next day I arrived at my house.

Without rest I commenced my operations; late at night I had nearly completed them, and, worn out in body and mind, I threw myself on the floor to sleep, lulled by the subdued sound of my furnace, which moaned and muttered like an unhappy spirit.

Early in the morning, after a feverish sleep, I rose, tired and unrefreshed, and began to complete the last portion of my arrangements. This was to prepare the liquid from which the beings to whom I had to impart life were to spring. On account of the experiments made in my late studies, I had all the ingredients ready in my laboratory. I poured the mixture then carefully into a large silver trough. The liquid was perfectly limpid, and of a beautiful blue colour, probably on account of a salt of copper entering largely into its composition.

And now I prepared my batteries, and soon afterwards the electric agent was applied. To my astonishment, no decomposition took place; the liquid remained clear and beautifully blue. Thus it remained for some hours. I hung over it in breathless expectation; the only change apparently being that the colour seemed deeper and purer.

Night came on, and the electric fluid still quietly streamed into the liquid. By accident, in adjusting one of the wires, I dashed a few drops from the trough on to the floor. There was a hissing sound as they fell, and as they touched the ground they burst into flame. This I extinguished, and then applied myself to observing closely the contents of the vessel, for I knew that a great change had taken place in their constitution. I removed the light to a distance, fearing lest it should ignite the vapours which were now rising from the surface. On returning in the dark I found strange flashes of light circling in the interior of the fluid; these gradually became brighter till I was enabled to see every object in the room clearly by their radiance.

Subtle fumes were also rising from the surface. On inhaling these fumes at first I felt faint, but the sensation passed away. The perfume now was delicious—it was heavenly; I drank it in like nectar. I gazed upon the coruscating surface, and a delicious ecstasy seemed to pervade the whole being; delicious streams of music fell softly on my ears, and shadowy forms of ineffable beauty floated in the air around me. Suddenly an insane

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desire took possession of me; I longed to seize the silver vessel and quaff the deep blue poison. I stretched out my hand with a cry of joy—and then——

* * * * * *

I recovered at last from a fever which had kept me insensible for a week. It was some days before I could get any explanation of how I came to be in my bedroom with my little wife attending to my every want, her gentle hands ever busy, and her eyes beaming with love and tenderness.

Gradually the details of my late occupation dawned upon my memory. I imagined I perceived the subtle odour diffusing itself through the chamber, and shuddered as I lay back on my pillow. A feeling of remorse came over me when I thought of my design. I felt as if I had intruded where man should fear to tread, and I felt a gratification in thinking that my designs had been frustrated.

One morning, when the doctor said that I was able to bear the news, I was told that one of the domestics, hearing a scream on that fearful night, had forced open the door of the laboratory. A strange, overpowering perfume, he said, at first drove him back, but rushing in a second time he found me lying insensible on the floor.

With breathless eagerness I asked if any of the apparatus had been touched? No, nothing had been moved. The windows had been opened to allow the poisonous vapours to disperse, the doors had been then locked and had never been opened since. A weight seemed lifted from my mind. I would instantly go down and destroy all that remained of my strange experiment.

I was still too weak; three or four days passed over, and then I was able to go downstairs. With trembling hands and beating heart (why, I could not tell) I turned the key and entered the laboratory, alone. Everything remained as I had left it a fortnight before.

Doing everything to entice me away.

There stood the ponderous batteries, long since worked out; there loosely hung the copper connecting wires, covered with green rust. The silver trough was tarnished and dim, but everything stood as I had left it.

The interior of the trough was coated with metallic copper, while the solution had almost entirely evaporated; there was still a small quantity of liquid at the bottom, covered with a thick, opal-tinted mould.

On looking closely at this mould-covered residue, I noticed a peculiar irregularity, or five little heaps or hillocks in regular arrangement—one at each angle of a square, and one in the centre—exactly like *the five-side of a gaming die.* These heaps were of such equal size and uniform shape that I could not attribute their presence to chance. I supposed that electricity had so acted upon the particles of the solution as to make them take up their present position.

I examined the mould under the microscope, and found it to be a fungus of a peculiar kind; but, in removing some more of the mould with a glass rod, I happened to touch one of the little heaps, and found under it a small blue crystal of cubic form, and under each of the other three angular hillocks I found a similar crystal.

On removing the mould from the centre hillock I found what, at first, I thought was a circular mass of the same crystalline substance, but imagine my surprise and horror when I saw the mass begin to struggle in the liquid, and, clearing away the silky needles of the mould, disclose to my view a large scarabæus of perfect shape, and of a deep blue colour.

A feeling of terror filled my mind. Whence had come this strange creature? Whence came the power with which he stretched out his antennæ, drew the blue case covers from his back, and cleared the mould from his filmy wings? Could this be the result of my researches—my days of toil, my nights of unrest? *A beetle!* I strove to laugh, but the attempt failed, and my heart sank within me with a strange foreboding. At this moment, from the interior of the trough, a peculiar sound arose, like the rapid ticking of a clock, although louder, and with a metallic tinkle in it. It was the same sound as that produced by the "death-tick" beetle.

As soon as the sound died away, I looked once more at the creature; he was half in and half out of the liquid, and evidently as yet unable to fly. The prominent desire in my mind was to destroy the insect, for his unearthly sounds and the strange flashing of his bead-like eyes made me tremble with a vague terror. However, I overcame the feeling, and determined to let him live for a few days.

Early next morning I visited the laboratory, but, on looking into the silver vessel, I was unable to detect any traces of the scarabæus. Puzzled and annoyed, I began to inspect the room, when I suddenly heard the ominous "death-tick," and after a few preliminary flights round the room, the beetle alighted upon the rim of the trough. A ray of sunlight glancing in fell upon him; his colour was exquisite—a rich, deep cærulean blue; he seemed a living sapphire, and would have been beautiful but for his loathsome form.

I had brought a piece of sugar with me, which I thought might please the taste of my new favourite. I placed it on the bench near; he flew directly towards it, and settled upon it, but, as if dissatisfied, a moment afterwards he flew back towards the rim of the trough. I heard a low whine at my feet, and, looking down, saw my wife's little dog, "Lalette." I threw the rejected sugar towards her, and soon heard her crunching it up in her jaws. Shortly afterwards I left the room, and as I closed the door louder than ever I heard the sound of the "death-tick."

I was engaged out of doors during the day, and in

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the evening my wife's first question was whether I had seen "Lalette" that day? I then remembered that she had been in the laboratory with me in the morning, and, fancying that she must be locked in, I went to the door and, opening it, called her by name. There was no movement or response; but, as I called again, something whirred past me in the air and dashed into the hall. I felt certain that my beetle had escaped. Shutting the door hastily, I rushed back for a light. On re-entering the laboratory, I could neither see nor hear anything of the beetle; but in the middle of the floor, exactly where I had left her in the morning, poor "Lalette" was lying dead.

Some portions of the sugar were still lying beside her—she had been poisoned. Once more I sought diligently for the beetle, but no trace was to be found. "Lalette" was a great favourite, and my poor wife was inconsolable. I told her the dog must have picked up some poison in my room, and with promises of a new canine favourite soon her grief calmed down.

All that night an indefinable horror took possession of me. When I thought of that living sapphire being at large in the house, a firm belief possessed me that "Lalette" had been killed by that poisonous insect. All that night he haunted my dreams; several times I started from slumber, thinking I heard that unearthly death-tick. I determined in my feverish sleeplessness to search every nook and corner of the house on the morrow. Somehow I felt at times that my existence, my destiny, was bound up in the life of this hideous insect.

Reproaches seemed spoken to me, in one dream of that long night, that I had created a living poison, and sent it out into the world. I shuddered and awoke. The words seemed burnt upon my brain. Could I ever forget them? Listen!

Next morning I heard that one of the domestics, a young, pretty girl of nineteen years, was ill. Three days after she died. The doctors said it was heart disease. One of them, a sententious old quack, said the only peculiarity of the case was a strange mark upon the girl's breast. A pang went through my whole frame. A mark. What mark? What was it like? By a mysterious perception I knew that this mark concerned me. But how? I soon knew. On the cold white breast of the corpse were *five blue spots*, arranged like the spots on *the five side of a die!*

Controlling my emotion as best I could, I locked myself in my room, and burying my face in my hands, cried in agony: "Accursed beast! this is thy work; the blood of an innocent being is on my hands." My brain seemed whirling round, and every attempt to collect my thoughts was in vain. The infernal creature—my creature!—had murdered this young girl, and how knew I where he would stop?

Every corner of the servants' room I searched, but no trace of the fiendish beast was there. After some time spent in this vain search, I left the room and joined my wife and friends below. They were shocked at my appearance. I sat apart, moody and silent. A heavy cloud of presentiment overpowered me, and I felt that my cup was not yet full, but that, when full, I should have to drink it to its bitter dregs. We separated to retire to rest; but though few of us expected to find it, no sooner had I laid my head on the pillow than I fell asleep—a dull, heavy sleep, as dreamless and almost as breathless as that of the corpse in the next chamber. I do not know how long I slept, but I awoke suddenly with an undefinable feeling of terror.

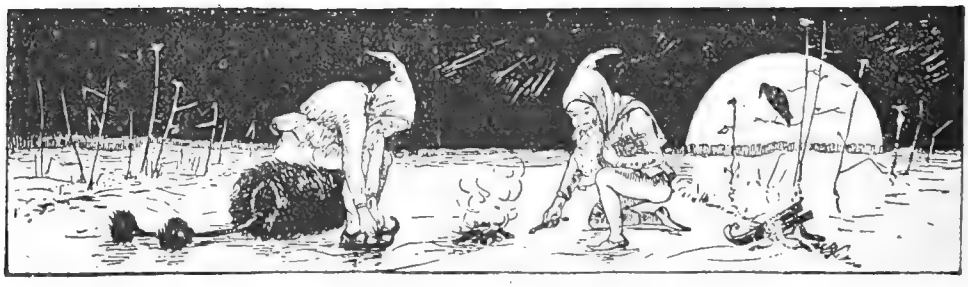
How dark the room is getting! Put your ear close to my mouth; I feel faint with speaking loud. But I must tell you all.

I awoke, and, seemingly, close to my ear, loud and distinct, I heard the death-tick. My hands clenched when I knew he was within my reach—close to my ear. "Heaven help me," I muttered, "if I do not crush the insect now!"

The moonbeams poured in through the window and filled the room with a mysterious light. The rays struck across the pillows of the bed, and fell softly on the upturned face of my wife. She slumbered peacefully, but on her snowy brow, glittering as blue as heaven itself, was the loathsome beetle. With one blow I struck him from her face, and then leapt from the bed. I saw his jewel-like form upon the ground; I seized it and crushed it in my hands. A fierce pain shot up my arm; my blood seemed changed to molten lead. The agony was excruciating. I dropped the vile abortion; he flew from me, and, dashing through the half-closed window, disappeared into the moonlight night.

My story is well-nigh told. You know—you know how my wife sickened and died. But, listen! you did not see the blue mark upon her brow.

How dark the room is, and how slowly my heart is beating! Look at this arm—here! Above the elbow there is the death-brand—*five blue spots arranged like the spots on a die!* I have but an hour to live. You know my secret. Let me rest. D. Shaw.



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A Waif from the Eternal City.

A block had occurred in one of the most crowded streets of Manchester. The carriage of the Chief Constable, with its well-matched bays, was forced to wait behind a brewer's dray till the confusion should have somewhat abated.

"Now, how long will this continue? We are late enough as it is."

The speaker's tone was that of a spoilt child, to whose pleasure all things are expected to give way, even the high pressure and the hurry of life of a great city. A beautiful woman was she, the pale spring sun rays—for it was early March—just striking the red gold lights in her warm brown hair as she sat there wrapped in dark Russian sables. She had a great bouquet of blue Parma violets in her hand; their subtle fragrance was flung abroad by the young spring breeze. Her eyes wandered to the other side of the street, and then they caught sight of something which gave her beauty-loving nature a throb of passionate delight.

"Paul, did you ever see such a face? It is faultless."

The petulant tones had a touch of rapture in them now. The Chief Constable adjusted his eye-glass, and followed the direction of his wife's eyes.

A boy stood on the pavement opposite, his basket filled with small plaster images. Such a face was his as Murillo loved to paint—a face with the beauty of dark eyes and the warm colouring of the sunny South.

"Call him across, Paul. I want to see him nearer."

"Oh, nonsense, my dear. Let us be going on now. The way is clear again."

"Paul!"

It is impossible to give the tone in which the name was spoken, half incredulous surprise, impatience, quick, intolerant anger—it was a mixture of all three.

The Chief Constable thought it wiser to obey. Pulling the checkstring, he beckoned to the boy. The lad came to the carriage door. Mrs. Bassett spoke to him in Italian. The soft, sonorous words came in a pretty English lisp from her lips: "Where do you come from?"

"Rome," he answered, and smiled up into her face, and then his eyes wandered to the violets she held in her hand. He gave a low cry, and stretched out his hands towards the blossoms with a gesture instinct with grace and longing.

She gave him some, and watched his face grow grave and sad as he held them close. Then she said:

"I should like to paint you—put you in one of my pictures. I will give you money—gold if you are good and still. Will you come to my house to-morrow?"

The boy's face flushed, his eyes were alight, his lips, scarlet as some bright blossom of his own land.

"To-morrow. Do not forget," said Mrs. Bassett to the boy, and she dropped the silver into his hand.

The carriage moved on.

For a moment the perfume of those violets, the flowers of his own dear land, was flung into the boy's face; then he stood alone upon the pavement, gazing after the swiftly-rolling carriage, with a little heap of silver and a cluster of Parma violets in his small brown hands.

* * * * *

"It is finished, Paul. Tell me what you think of it."

Mr. Bassett looked up from the papers he was studying as his wife came to his side with a square of canvas in her arms.

He regarded it silently for awhile through his eye-glass. Then he said, slowly: "It is a really wonderful likeness."

She passed her hand through his arm, and they stood together looking at the painting.

"It is very good," said Bassett again.

"Then it must indeed be so, for you are always sparing of your praise—always rather hard upon failure," she answered a little wistfully.

"Why should one fail? One ought to succeed in small as well as great things. But women never will so long as they work only from caprice."

It was true he had never yet failed in skill or energy or in clever administration since he had held the office of Chief Constable of Manchester, and he was not a little proud of the fact.

* * * * *

Autumn had passed away, and winter's cold, white pall was covering with icy impartiality the grimy streets of the city, when Manchester rang from end to end with one theme—the sudden, strange disappearance of the little Italian image-seller. The boy had become well known in the streets, through which, day after day, he wandered with his little store of plaster images.

When the news had spread through the force that Mrs. Bassett was painting his picture, the men had felt that he was somehow especially entitled to their protection, and many a friendly word had passed between them and the little soft-voiced lad—who was "as pretty as a girl," one said to another. Ladies, too—friends of Mrs. Bassett, who had seen the painting and pronounced it "too lovely"—stopped their carriages as he passed, and gave him bright smiles and brighter sixpences. And now, without word or warning, he had suddenly disappeared.

Every effort made by the police to discover his whereabouts was completely baffled. They more than suspected foul play. But this uncertainty as to the fate of the beautiful child was not long to remain.

One morning the Chief Constable was greatly disturbed by a report from one of his men that a "subject" purchased by some students bore a strange resemblance to the missing boy, and that, when the little body came to be examined, it was found that all the teeth had been extracted, probably from fear of identification on account of their unusual beauty.

These were the days of the "Resurrectionists." Burke and Hare, as yet undiscovered, were plying in secret their awful trade. But even already vague rumours had risen from time to time of graves rifled of their dead in the lonely watches of the night.

Mrs. Bassett was very much distressed. Full of generous and kindly impulse, she had concocted many a plan for her little *protégé's* future; had intended—when the picture should be finished—to rescue him from the streets, and place him somewhere in safe and kindly keeping. She urged her husband to leave no means untried of discovering his fate.

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The Chief Constable, on his part, was both perplexed and annoyed by his repeated failures to run to earth the boy's murderers. Every effort was made by himself and his men to find some clue. The great probability was that the clothes the child had worn were destroyed; but the teeth, Mr. Bassett thought, being saleable, sooner or later might be traced. Failure in anything he had determined upon was trying to a man of Paul Bassett's turn of mind; but to fail in a matter like the present, with the eyes of all Manchester upon him, was peculiarly vexatious.

It preyed upon him to an extent so great that neither night nor day was he able to forget it. Like a thing of darkness, it haunted his sleeping and his waking hours.

And one night it came to pass that he dreamed a curious dream. He fancied he was riding along a lonely road in the dead of night. He knew the road well. It was one he often traversed in his waking hours. But when he came to a part where two roads met he thought he hesitated, and then, instead of turning to the right, as he was conscious even in his dream of usually doing, he took the left, an untrodden, gloomy lane, which led to a wide, lonely moor.

He rode on and on, and by-and-bye came to a solitary house on the edge of the desolate moor. It stood out against the dark background as clearly as a silhouette drawing in the moonlight. Suddenly—he knew not how—there was borne in upon him the conviction that the clue to the mystery of the Italian boy's death lay within that lonely house.

He drew rein and stopped. He felt a sensation of horror creep over him, which he tried to shake off, but it held him like a terrible nightmare. Suddenly the dream changed, and he found himself trying to enter. The door was fastened, but he burst it open. A sound of stealthy footsteps and whispered words was followed by death-like silence. Cold grey shadows filled the rooms, and a nameless terror dogged his footsteps. But, impelled by some all-powerful instinct, Paul Bassett went up the stairs, and entered a small room at the top—the only one that commanded a view of the back of the house. He saw before him a large garden, overhung by dark trees that cast weird shadows about it in the pale moonbeams.

Mr. Bassett, still having that strange sense of being under compulsion, descended the stairs, and found his way into the garden.

He was conscious of carefully searching beneath the trees, when suddenly his foot struck against a small lump of clay. Kneeling down, he felt with his hands under the long, dank grass, and found that the earth had been recently disturbed, and covered again by the coarse sods, and in an instant he knew, as if by a revelation, that what he was seeking lay below.

And just then the Chief Constable awoke. So vivid had been his dream, so strongly lay the impression of it upon him, that he started up with the fancy that he was still in that lonely garden. He lay down again, pondering over it a little perplexedly. It had seemed so real, so vivid, he could not at once shake off the impression it had left upon him; and by-and-bye he fell asleep again, and dreamed precisely the same dream in all its details. It was just as before; nothing was changed, from the time he was riding along the lonely lane till he stumbled over the little lump of clay, and saw that near where he stood the ground had been upturned, and then, as before, he awoke.

He was not by any means a superstitious man, but the clearness of the dream, and the fact of his having twice dreamed it, impressed him greatly. He awoke his wife and told her. No one likes to be aroused from sleep and told a horrible dream. The Chief Constable met with small sympathy from Mrs. Bassett, who told him to "hold his tongue and not frighten her to death."

He fell asleep, and again he dreamed the same dream, and awoke as he stood by the broken sod. He sprang from his bed and began hurriedly to dress.

"Really, Paul, I believe you are mad," said Mrs. Bassett sleepily. "What on earth are you about?"

But when he told her of his dreaming the third time the same strange dream, she entreated him not to go.

But he promised her to take four of his most experienced men with him, and she gave a reluctant consent—silently, except for the ring of their horses' hoofs upon the frost-bound earth, the chief constable and his men rode along, turning to the left as they reached the cross-roads, and down the long lane till the wide moor lay before them. And then Paul Bassett saw the house just as it had appeared to him in his dream. It stood aside on the edge of the desolate moor, silent as the grave, lonely as the place of death. Ivy covered thickly its grey walls, and tapped against the latticed panes in the rising wind like the touch of ghostly fingers. Pale, wan moonbeams fell aslant the garden, and sombre shadows gathered thickly under the trees. One of the men dismounted and knocked sharply.

"Open, in the King's name!"

The Chief Constable held the search-warrant in his hand as he sat motionless upon his horse, waiting. There was neither sound nor movement within. The constable knocked again loudly, and as he did so they distinctly heard stealthy footsteps and whispered words.

"Open, in the King's name!"

And the door was opened by a woman.

"Dismount," said the Chief Constable sharply, "and follow me," and he flung himself from the saddle. Instructing two of his men to watch that no one left the house, without another word he led the way to the place of his dream.

"Dig here, my men; you will find what we are seeking," he said quietly. And he looked on as one still in a dream, his breath coming thick and fast, his heart beating heavily, as his men slowly turned the loosened earth. Cautiously and in silence they dug, and their chief stood by with a pale, stern face. An exclamation from one of the men made him start. The spade had struck against something. They stooped, lowered their lanterns, and took out of the earth a small bundle. Yes, there were the worn jacket and little threadbare garments of the murdered boy, and as one of the men half tenderly lifted the poor little coat one or two pearly teeth fell from its folds. A savage murmur rose to the men's lips. "Poor little lad."

The Chief Constable's voice was husky.

"What is that?"

Sudden life and movement in the silent house and a sound of shots. Mr. Bassett gave his men some hurried, sharp directions. They dashed into the house only just in time; their comrades were engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the murderers who were armed.

Needless to say that at their trial they pleaded guilty, in the face of such evidence as this strange discovery.

Needless also to say that that was the first and only time in his life that Paul Bassett, Chief Constable of Manchester, was ever aided by a dream in the discovery of a crime.

Annie Davis.

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The Queen of Night.

By HEADON HILL,

Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

Gaston Vizard gives to Sir Simon Crawshay an introduction to the agent of the vessel *Queen of Night*, in order that he may make special arrangements with regard to the trip of his wealthy ward, Miss Challenor. Dr. Zavertal calls on Vizard, and informs him that a new captain will be wanted before the next cruise.

The *Queen of Night*, under the guise of a popular pleasure boat, is used in reality by a set of unscrupulous adventurers for the purpose of doing away with objectionable relatives.

In Chapter I. Cyril Forrester receives his dismissal from the Flower Steamship Company for breaking regulations while saving the life of Miss Aline Challenor. He applies for and obtains from Nathan and Co., of Fenchurch Street, the vacant command of the ocean yacht *Queen of Night*.

Becoming engaged to Miss Challenor (who comes in for a quarter of a million on attaining her majority), he obtains an interview with Sir Simon Crawshay, who promptly refuses a consent to his engagement, and informs him that his ward will be out of his way for the next six weeks, as she is about to take a cruise on board the *Queen of Night!* On going aboard he is introduced to Dr. Zavertal, and meets among the passengers Miss Challenor, who is under the care of the doctor.

CHAPTER VI.

The Doctor's First Patient.

It was not till noon on the day after leaving port, when we were well down Channel, at the back of the Isle of Wight, that I felt justified in handing over the care of the ship to the chief officer, and in quitting the bridge. The day was fine, and the sea as calm as a duck pond, so that nearly all the passengers were on deck enjoying the fresh salt air, and busily engaged in forming new friendships which should last through the cruise. Already there were signs that one or two promising flirtations had arisen. The weather had tempted the ladies to put on their brightest summer costumes, everyone had left their worries behind, and the scene was one of light laughter and brilliant colour.

I went first to my room to remove the traces of the long night watch, and change my clothes. Having made my toilet, I strolled aft, and soon found myself doing the civil to the best of my ability to the various groups under the awning, purposely abstaining from seeking Aline at first. It was no part of my plan to make her conspicuous, or to attract to her the gossip which takes root so easily on ship-board. Zavertal was there, apparently in his element—introducing, advising, amusing, all in a breath—and as soon as he noticed my presence I saw that he was making the most of it. The words, "the Captain," are magical ones at sea, and their owner is an object of interest to all his nominal subjects to a quite unmerited degree.

"The Captain—Captain Forrester," I heard the Doctor murmur in a deferential whisper, as I approached a bevy of smart folk congregated round an old gentleman seated in a deck chair, who seemed to be telling funny stories. Zavertal's announcement caused all eyes to be turned on me, and he proceeded aloud:

"Good morning, sir. You have had a long spell of work while the rest of us have been playing and sleeping, I am afraid."

I returned his greeting, and, assuming the airs of a veteran skipper, I remarked that it was always my practice to take charge of the ship myself while in sight of land. Then I asked to be introduced to the other people around, and he pronounced a string of names, all immaterial to this story, though I got to be familiar enough with most of them in the next week or two. I do not know whether it was by intention, but Zavertal omitted to mention the old gentleman in the deck-chair, and he promptly put on an expression of comic resentment.

One or two promising flirtations had arisen.

"Why should you pass me over, Doctor?" he protested with a distinct American accent. "I guess you think my yarns would keep the Captain from his duty, and that it would be safer for all parties if he didn't know me."

Zavertal looked at him, smiling with his lips; but, though the glance was not directed at me, and I could not therefore be certain, I fancied that the cold glint was in his eyes as he answered:

"I am quite sure, sir, it would be very much safer, if you always prove as amusing—to *me*, at any rate—as you have this morning, though that was not really the reason why I was so rude as to fail to introduce you to the Captain. The fact is I am sorry to have to confess that you are one of the very few passengers whose names I am not yet quite certain about."

Was it that there was a half-tone in Zavertal's voice that suggested to me some subtle meaning in his words, or was it only that instinct was beginning to teach me to look for such uncon-

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sciously? I cannot say truly even now, but I know that the thought crossed my mind and caused me to pay closer attention to him whom he addressed. The passenger in the deck-chair, as I have said, was old, his appearance being that of seventy at least, even allowing for a liberal discount due to his lively briskness of manner. I had come across the type many times before in many ships—the gay "old dog" of a passenger who prefers young society of both sexes, and attracts it to himself by a pleasing personality and a fund of anecdote. This particular specimen had a rubicund face, shining like a setting sun, amid luxuriant masses of snow-white hair, his bright eyes twinkled humorously, and he was dressed, rather young for his age, in a well-cut suit of light dittos, surmounted by a white Panama straw hat.

If there was any hidden meaning in the Doctor's speech the snowy-haired passenger showed no sign of suspecting it. Raising his hat lightly, more especially to me, but so as to include the general company, he said:

"Emerson C. Waldo, sir, is my name—General Waldo, late of the United States Cavalry, on a Yurrup tour for the benefit of health and education. I reckon I've powerfully neglected both, sir, in my time, having mostly spent my life in fighting Indians on the plains."

"Well, General," I said, "I hope that you will make up for lost time, and get all the arrears of enjoyment due to you on the *Queen of Night*. It's not in the contract, but we mean to give you fine weather, smooth seas, and, when we get down South, blue skies—if we can. We start fair anyhow."

I remained chatting a minute or two, and when I moved away Zavertal separated from the group and joined me in a promenade of the deck.

"You have been so occupied, sir, that I have got the start of you with the passengers," he said. "I may as well take the opportunity of posting you in what I have picked up. They are an average lot."

"Many invalids?" I asked, with a vivid remembrance of the bo'sun's reference to "sea-funerals," though my question seemed almost silly amid that scene of gaiety and robust health.

"A few, but not many serious cases. There, though you might not think it, is one of them," the Doctor replied, pointing to a happy-looking, chubby-faced boy of fourteen who was amusing some of the elders by skylarking on the lower rattlins. "That is the young Earl of Darranmore, who, if he ever attains his majority, will possess a rent-roll of forty thousand a year. I fear that the lad is doomed, though—heart complications." And Zavertal sighed sympathetically as we wheeled for another turn.

The gay "old dog" of a passenger.

"That is hard lines," I said. "Are there any others about whom you are anxious?"

"There's a man called Desmond Orlebar, whom I doubt if we shall bring home again. He has gone the pace, and got himself into a generally played-out condition. There he is—sitting wrapped up on the other side of the deck, and indulging in his old games to the last, I see."

Following the direction of his glance, I saw a thin, sallow-faced man of forty, wearing a thick plaid ulster and propped up with pillows on a portable bamboo lounge. A steward had just brought him a mahogany-coloured brandy and soda, and Mr. Orlebar's efforts to take the glass from the tray into his shaking hands were painful to witness. There was no doubt about *this* passenger's illness.

"Poor beggar," I said. "And does that complete the list of dangerous cases?"

"Of the really dangerous ones, yes," replied Zavertal. "There are one or two other patients who come to me with bad reports from their relations or private medical attendants; but I see no reason to be apprehensive about any of them—except, perhaps, one."

A chubby-faced boy of fourteen.

"Who is that?" I asked, somewhat carelessly, I fear, as we reached the limit of our promenade at the stern. Facing about we both turned inwards to each other, so that as Zavertal answered my question his eyes for a moment dwelt on mine. Again they had that strange glint.

"She is a Miss Challenor," was the reply that so startled me that it would have been affectation on his part to have pretended not to notice its palpable effect. He hastened to add: "I rather fancy Nathan, before he went ashore, told me that you had met her."

"Yes, in a way I may be said to have saved her life," I replied, and, seeing no reason for further concealing a fact which was sure to get abroad in the ship, I briefly narrated the circumstances, only suppressing my present relations with Aline. "But surely," I concluded, "there must be some mistake about the state of Miss Challenor's health? I had a few words with her yesterday, and she laughed at the idea of there being anything the matter with her."

We turned again, and again I met the Doctor's gaze piercing me from out of a face that smiled with sad benevolence in every feature but the eyes. "The old story," he said sympathetically. "Everyone concedes the danger but the patient herself. I have not been called on to examine her yet, but her guardian wrote that it was an almost hopeless case of pulmonary phthisis. I presume her friends thought it unnecessary to frighten the poor girl by letting her know the nature and extent of her malady. However, as you take a very natural interest in her, I will observe closely, and let you know in a day or two. Excuse me, but I think I am wanted—and, Captain, if you will allow me to advise, you will turn in for a spell. Your night-watch has taken it out of you, and you look as if you needed rest."

Needed rest! As he left my side to go to someone who was beckoning to him, the sun seemed to be blotted out, and the voices and laughter around made a horrid blur in my ears like the "racing" of machinery when the main shaft breaks. To think that Aline—my sweet Aline, in the

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heyday of her youth and beauty, and in the height of our new-found happiness—was dying of consumption!

Then gradually the weight of sudden oppression was lifted, and, reaction setting in, I would not, could not, believe that the trouble existed at all. I recalled what Aline had said about the "wish being father to the thought" with Sir Simon, and I began to suspect that he had imagined what, probably from interested motives, he desired to become a reality. It was the first inkling of the truth, but how far short of it the events to be related must show.

The wind was light and steady from the East, and the glass high. We were clanking down Channel at an easy sixteen knots, with the massive front of the Main-bench cliffs glistening white in the sunlight five miles away on the starboard beam. There was nothing to keep me on deck, and having satisfactorily explained away the cause of my anxiety I decided to take Zavertal's advice and turn in till dinner time, leaving him to do the honours at the luncheon table.

In going to my room I had to pass the spot where Mr. Orlebar's lounge was placed, and just as I was approaching it I met Aline's chaperon, as yet unknown to me, coming along the deck alone from the opposite direction. The sick man caught sight of her while I was within two feet of him, and the effect of her appearance upon him was as inexplicable as it was sudden. His shaking fingers dropped the now empty glass with a crash upon the deck, and I distinctly heard him murmur:

"Great Heaven, it's Ella!"

The recognition, if such it was to prove, did not appear to be mutual. Mrs. Brinkworth's attention was, of course, attracted by the falling glass, and she looked at the occupant of the lounge; but beyond a slight flush and a fleeting expression of disgust, which might very naturally have been called up by Orlebar's repulsive, drink-sodden features, no sign of knowing him escaped her. She passed on, stately and unmoved, to the after part of the deck, where I had no doubt that Aline was waiting for her.

There was no doubt about this passenger's illness.

"Great Heaven, it's Ella!"

I had seen too many chance meetings on ship-board for the incident to make any impression on me, and I should have dismissed it altogether from my mind if one of the parties to it had not been so intimately connected with Aline. As it was I merely noted it mentally for future inquiry in the event of anything tending to show that Orlebar's presence on the ship would cause annoyance to a lady who had already won my dear girl's regard.

After a good sleep I awoke refreshed, and comforted with the reflection that after all, beyond specifying the nature of her imaginary illness, Zavertal had really said nothing more than Aline herself to confirm Sir Simon Crawshay's estimate of her health. The Doctor had not examined her chest, and his statement was based on nothing more substantial than a secondhand opinion which was probably all moonshine. I dressed therefore with every anticipation of a pleasant evening, and after a short visit to the bridge to see that all was right, I went down and mingled with the passengers, eventually making my way to where Aline was sitting with Mrs. Brinkworth.

I have the instinct common to most people of knowing a friend from an enemy at first sight, and something told me from that moment that the quiet, sad-faced woman was Aline's friend, and therefore mine. I think she had already guessed our secret, but if not she had every opportunity of doing so in the cheery half-hour we three spent together before the first gong sounded for dinner. We lovers were too confident in the future and in the freedom which Aline's majority would bring her in a few months, to affect more reserve than etiquette demanded in public. The shy and sentimental stage of courtship had been got over in the old *Dahlia*, and there was a very frank understanding between us.

When I sat down presently to preside for the first time in the saloon, I found that I had General Waldo for my left-hand neighbour, and on the other side an ancient dowager—Lady Carberry—who took the

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place of honour by right of her title. Aline and Mrs. Brinkworth were seated at my table, but some way down, and too far off for sustained conversation with them.

Parallel with mine was another table, at the head of which Doctor Zavertal presided, with the little Earl of Darranmore and the latter's tutor on one hand, and a financial magnate and his wife on the other. Mr. Desmond Orlebar was also placed at the Doctor's table, but some half-dozen seats away. The "captain's table," of course, accommodated those who were, or considered themselves, the *élite* of the ship, and it was not till I found myself at the head of the brilliant assemblage, and the most deferred-to personage in it, that I appreciated Nathan's compliment in selecting me for the job.

Dinner proceeded gaily, and I worked hard to make up for lost time in cultivating friendly relations with the passengers. General Waldo kept our end of the table in a constant roar of laughter with comic descriptions of Western life, at which even the starchy old lady on my right had to unbend, and by the time dessert was reached I concluded that the social part of my duty was easier than I had expected. Things were going equally smoothly at the other table, where, with his quips and cranks, the young Earl was evidently establishing himself a general favourite. The interest in the merry youngster even spread to our table, his boyish laughter at Zavertal's good-humoured sallies causing many heads to be turned to look at him. General Waldo, who could see him as he sat, seemed to watch him unceasingly with the sympathetic attention due to a kindred spirit.

Lifted the young Earl's limp form.

Suddenly, as the ladies were beginning to leave the saloon, Waldo plucked me by the sleeve, and exclaimed:

"Thunder, Captain! The swell of the ocean ought to be kinder to the swell *on* the ocean. What's up with our young aristocrat yonder?"

I thought at first that the veteran was merely cracking one of his copious wheezes, but I looked round to the head of the other table, and sure enough there was the Earl of Darranmore leaning back in his chair and gone deathly white, while Zavertal had risen and was deftly unbuttoning the boy's collar with one hand and feeling his pulse with the other. The night was dead calm, and save for the slight tremor caused by the pulsing of the engines the ship was as steady as a church. Waldo's suggestion of sea-sickness seemed, therefore, wide of the mark, and I recollected what the Doctor had said of the lad's weak heart in the morning.

At Zavertal's bidding a couple of assistant stewards lifted the young Earl's limp form and bore it away to his state-room, the Doctor himself following, but pausing as he passed out to say to me:

"It is only a faint. He will be all right to-morrow, but I fear this confirms the report I had of him—poor little chap!" And Zavertal hurried away tapping his broad waistcoat in the region of the heart, and repeating again: "Poor little chap."

The tables were already pretty well thinned, and in a couple of minutes the incident was forgotten by such as remained, Waldo resuming the thread of a yarn, in which he had been interrupted, about a Texan horse-thief, scoring all his points, bringing the story to a close, and thoroughly enjoying the applause that greeted the climax. For a moment or two, he sat as though meditating a fresh narrative, then suddenly jumped up and exclaimed:

"Pineapple, by Jove. I guess I'm a whale on pineapple," and before I could tell him that the steward should bring him some, he had crossed over to the now vacant table where Lord Darranmore had been sitting, and had seized a dish of the fruit that was there, coming back with it to his own place.

As he resumed his seat he looked at me. For the fraction of a second all the babbling fun in his face changed to stern scrutiny, and in that brief, steadfast gaze, remembrance came to me of someone quite different whom I had seen before—of Kennard, the American visitor to Nathan's office, who had forfeited his passage. The likeness was one of expression only, and was gone like a flash, as with one of his jokes Waldo set to upon the pineapple with a relish that justified his eagerness to secure it.

CHAPTER VII.

The Stowaway.

The next morning everyone was glad to hear that Zavertal's prediction had been verified, and that Lord Darranmore was not much the worse for his faint at the dinner-table. It got to be generally known about the ship that the boy's heart was affected, and when he came on deck during the morning, looking pale and seedy, he became the victim of a universal sympathy which didn't best please him.

"It's all rot," was his indignant reply when I met him and remarked that he would have to "go easy" and take care of himself. "There's nothing the matter with me—at least I never had anything the matter before. I expect I had too much of that meringue cream."

The weather continued fine and sunny, with just enough breeze to revive the jaded among the passengers without making them uncomfortable. Being now clear of the Channel, my presence on the bridge was seldom required, and I contrived to have several delightful chats with Aline, Mrs. Brinkworth discreetly making opportunities for a portion of them to be *tête-à-tête*.

At the same time I did not allow my love-affair to obscure my duties to the other passengers, and I worked hard to add to the general yacht-like life on board. All sorts of amusements in the musical and theatrical line were being projected, the Doctor showing untiring energy in discovering amateur talent where it might least have been expected. He even laid an embargo on General Waldo to give a character recitation from Rip Van Winkle at a variety entertainment that he was planning for the succeeding night. The Yankee veteran was discussing Zavertal's enterprise in a constitutional we took together before tiffin.

"Wonderful pushing fellow this Doctor of yours, Captain," he said, as we paced the deck. "You and he are just cut out for running a marine hydropathic show like this. He's an old partner of yours, I reckon."

"On the contrary; I've only known him a week," I replied. "This is my first voyage in the *Queen*, you must remember."

"Ah, but friend Zavertal hasn't always been at this game, I opine," returned Waldo, with an impatient gesture and one of his quizzical glances. "You can bet he qualified in a wider school than this. I guessed you might have pulled together previously."

"No, General," I said, wondering a little at his persistence after my first denial. "The Doctor and I are quite new acquaintances, though I must say that I hope we shall one day be old ones. He is a pleasant companion to sail with, and about the best man for the berth of ship's surgeon I ever came across."

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"A responsible position—that of ship's doctor," remarked Waldo, more thoughtfully than as yet I had heard him speak. "It entails the powers of life and death—the perfectly unchecked power of life and death."

On the top of this conversation I was rather amused when Zavertal on the same afternoon took an opportunity of mentioning Waldo to me from much the same point of view.

"Fine specimen of the globe-trotting American, that neighbour of yours at the saloon table," he said. "You and he seem to hit it off together uncommonly well, sir."

"Oh, he is all right, up to date," I replied. "Perhaps one might get bored in time with his everlasting yarns of Western life."

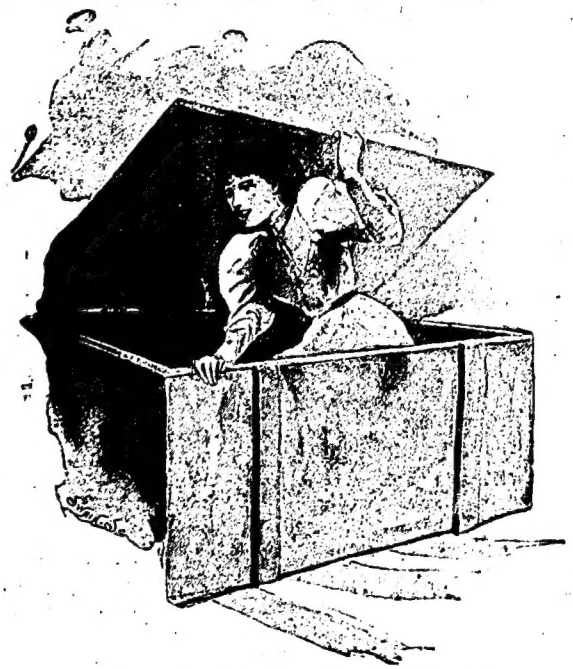
"I thought you might have met him before—you seemed so friendly," Zavertal said, in the careless tone of one who really wants to know.

"No, I never saw the General before on sea or land," I said. "He is not the sort of man one would forget either, seeing that he has a peculiarity. He strikes me as being a little more "twangy" than most Americans of his class nowadays."

"You are right," replied the Doctor, "and it is bound to be genuine. That is about the only thing an American wouldn't exaggerate purposely."

I had got pretty intimate with Zavertal during the four or five days we spent together before the ship sailed. I had told him of the American, Kennard, who had called at Nathan's office while I was waiting to be engaged, and I had since discussed with him his strange forfeiture of his passage, Zavertal remarking playfully that perhaps the gentleman with the pistol had met him again and had not been so forbearing. I was now on the point of mentioning casually how for half a second on the previous night Waldo's expression had reminded me of the absent passenger, when someone hailed me from the bridge and the subject dropped.

A little later on the afternoon of the third day out, Zavertal proposed a game of "hide-and-seek," and was soon surrounded by a number of younger passengers eager to join. Several of them hid in turn, and were found in more or less probable hiding-places—under the companion-stairs, and behind the piano in the music-room, while one adventurous maiden gave a longer chase than usual by stowing herself in the flag-locker behind the aft wheel-house. Then it was Lord Darranmore's turn to hide, and the searchers all retired to the dome, over the saloon stairs, while he concealed himself.



By stowing herself in the flag-locker.

Aline and Mrs. Brinkworth, in common with a number of other non-players, were sitting under the awning, watching the game, when it chanced on to the upper deck, and chatting to myself and to General Waldo, who by this time was on speaking terms with every living soul on the ship. Thus we four were together when Lord Darranmore came out of the deck-house to hide. The best places on the upper deck having already been exhausted by other players, the ladies expressed the opinion that he would have to go below if he was to show good sport.

A woebegone figure.

"With due submission, I guess not," remarked Waldo. "The young 'un has got a best bower to play, to judge by his manœuvres."

It seemed to me that the General was right. The boy did not hesitate for an instant, as if doubtful of where to go, but turned and went forward on the port side till he came nearly abreast of the Doctor's cabin, opposite which our steam launch was slung. The davits supporting it were turned inwards over the deck to prevent any risk of losing the launch in heavy weather, so that it was accessible without danger of falling overboard. It was covered with a tarpaulin, and to reach it it would be necessary to swarm up the davit, but these difficulties were evidently not going to deter an agile Eton boy from availing himself of a hiding-place so likely to be overlooked. Zavertal was standing in the door of the companion-way ready to give the word to the searchers, and he smiled and winked at us as the young Earl began to shin up the davit hand-over-hand.

Darranmore soon got a grip on the bulwarks of the launch, and we watched him raise the edge of the tarpaulin, duck his head beneath it, and slowly wriggle out of sight. As soon as he had disappeared, Zavertal gave the word to the seekers, and they came trooping out of the companion-way to commence the search. The quest had hardly begun in earnest when Lord Darranmore's head reappeared from under the tarpaulin, and it was seen that his face wore a comic expression of alarm or excitement.

"I say, this game's off," he cried out, clambering out of the launch. "There's a chap hiding in there already."

"Nonsense," said Zavertal, going up to him as he reached the deck. "You must be mistaken, Lord Darranmore. There can't be anyone there."

"I tell you I am not mistaken," retorted the lad hotly. "There's a man lying huddled up in the bows. I heard him breathing first, and then I put my hand out and felt him."

"We'll soon settle it," I said, joining the group with Waldo and a number of other passengers. "Here, Smith," I added to a quartermaster who was passing, "just take a look under that tarpaulin and see if you can catch a stowaway."

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But before the order could be executed, the boy's statement was verified in a different way. The tarpaulin over the bows of the launch was raised, and a head covered with touzled black hair appeared, presenting such a woebegone figure that some of the passengers laughed. The apparition looked like a foreigner, and certainly did not belong to the ship. As for myself, I felt considerable annoyance, for a stowaway was a pest against which I had taken no precautions, it not occurring to me that anyone would try to sneak a passage on a ship not known as a regular "liner."

"Come down out of that," I said. "We will see if we can't find you better quarters in the hold, with a brace of anklets to steady you."

But the threat fell flat. "No spik Ingleese. Angry," moaned the stowaway.

"Poor fellow, he means that he is hungry. Don't be hard on him," pleaded Aline, who had come up with the rest, and to that sweet intervention the stranger owed the treatment that was meted out to him. By signs he was at length induced to leave the launch, and on reaching the deck he stood revealed as a tall, finely-built fellow, with features that, despite their extreme swarthiness, were by no means ill-looking. Zavertal, who was a master of many languages, tried him with several, and at last pronounced him to be a Spaniard, and a ship's steward by calling, who, failing to find a berth on a ship going to Spain, had taken this way of getting home.

"Very well," I said, "we will allow him to work his way; but he shall not get off too easy. He must go the round trip with us, and we will leave him at Gibraltar or Lisbon on the homeward voyage. Off with him forward, and give him some food."

My verdict having been translated to him, he was taken in charge by the quartermaster, bowing and scraping his thanks. The excitement lasted the passengers the rest of the afternoon, Lord Darranmore creating much amusement by taking all the credit of the capture. I heard Waldo drawing him on the subject of his discovery.

"I guess you were never smart enough to think of the launch to hide in yourself?" said the General.

"Well, not quite," admitted the boy reluctantly.

"And who might have been responsible for that bright idea?" asked the old gentleman.

"It was the Doctor who put me up to it," said Darranmore.

Waldo did not pursue the matter further, but walked away with a queer shrug of his shoulders.

That night at dinner the swarthy Spaniard, washed and brushed up, took his place among the assistant stewards who waited at Zavertal's table.

(To be continued.)

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THE BOTTOM PRINCIPLE.

Nothing "merely happens so." Always keep that fact where you can see it. Whatsoever comes to pass has an adequate cause right behind it. I don't say this as though it were a new discovery. Not a bit. It is the bottom principle of all knowledge. But we are apt to forget it—that's the point; we forget it, and so have a lot of trouble there's no need to have.

Here is Miss Esther May whom we are glad to hear from, and to know. In the matters set forth in her short letter, she speaks not for herself only, but for two-thirds of the women in England.

"In July, 1890," she says, "I had an attack of influenza, which left me in a weak, exhausted condition. I felt languid and tired. Everything was a trouble to me. The good appetite that is natural to me was gone; and when I did take a little food it gave me a dreadful pain in the chest. There was also a strange sensation in my stomach. I felt as if I had eaten too much when perhaps I had scarcely eaten anything.

"Then, after a time, I began to have a dry, hacking cough, and to break out in cold, clammy sweats. Not very long afterwards my ankles began to puff up and swell, so that when I stood on my feet it was very painful.

"I gradually got worse and worse. The medicines given me by the doctors seemed to have no effect. I lost flesh like one in consumption, and I feared I should never be any better.

"In March, 1893, a gentleman told me about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and said he believed it would help me. Although I had no faith in it I sent for the Syrup and began taking it. One bottle relieved me and gave me some appetite. I ate and enjoyed my food as I had not done for years. I gained strength every day.

"I am now as healthy and hearty as I ever was in my life, and I owe it to Mother Seigel's Syrup. (Signed) Esther May, Buckingham Road, Northfleet, Kent, September 8th, 1893."

"In the spring of 1887," writes another correspondent, "my wife got into a low state of health. She complained at first of feeling tired and weary, and could not do her work as usual. Her mouth tasted badly; she couldn't eat, and she had a deal of pain in her chest and back.

"Later on her legs began to swell, and soon the swelling extended to her body. With all this her strength failed more and more, until she could just go about the house in a feeble fashion, and that was all. No medical treatment did more than to relieve her, as you may say, for the moment.

"This was her condition when Mother Seigel's Syrup first came under our notice. We read of it in a book that was left at our house. After she had taken the Syrup only a few days she was decidedly better. And, to conclude, by a faithful use of the medicine the swelling went down, her appetite came back, and she was soon as well and strong as ever. Seeing what the Syrup had done for my wife, I began to take it for indigestion and dyspepsia, which had troubled me for years, and it completely cured me. (Signed) J. Heath, Orotava House, Alpha Road, Cambridge, June 15th, 1893."

We were speaking of nothing happening without a cause. The cause of all the suffering of these two women was one and the same—indigestion and dyspepsia. Men have it often enough, but this disease is especially the bane of women—with chronic constipation as one of its worse features. It is the cause of nearly all the ills and ailments they suffer from. Let every woman get a book which Mr. Heath speaks of, and learn all about it. They can thus find out what the first symptoms are, and take Mother Seigel's Syrup the very day they appear.

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